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OUTSTANDING TEACHERS AS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES: A STUDY OF  
BURNOUT

*The University of North Carolina at Greensboro*

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OUTSTANDING TEACHERS AS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES:  
A STUDY OF BURNOUT

by

Patricia Terrell Schreiber

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
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1985

Approved by

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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following  
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This study was an interpretive inquiry into the phenomenon of burnout and why career-status teachers terminated their careers. Specifically, it focused attention on the relationship between the reasons the teachers resigned and how they experienced teaching. This research gained insights into the following questions: 1) Why are career-status teachers terminating their careers early? 2) Do they believe they suffered from the phenomenon of burnout? 3) How extensively did these teachers integrate teaching with their personal lives? 4) Were these teachers able to derive meaning from their teaching experiences? If not, did this contribute to their unhappiness? and 5) Do they believe that terminating their careers could have been avoided?

The first phase of the research was a review of the literature to investigate the phenomenon of burnout. Theories by leading authorities on burnout were presented. Their research was compared and contrasted.

The second phase included a review of research by Gardner, Allport, Jersild, Frankl, and others who wrote on meaning. Frankl's work was selected as a framework for the concept of meaning for the research.

The third phase was to select an appropriate mode of inquiry. To gain insights into the ways former teachers experienced teaching and integrated it with their personal



lives, the qualitative mode of inquiry was selected.

The fourth phase of the research was to interview intensively four former teachers. Two males and two females were chosen. In-depth accounts of the interviews were presented and the dialogues were individually interpreted. These interpretations were followed by an analysis of the responses from the four interviews.

In the final chapter, reflections and interpretations of the data were given. Questions for further investigative inquiry that emerged from this study were discussed. In conclusion, the responsibilities for teacher burnout of administrators, society, and teachers were identified.

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I am indebted to the four teachers in this dissertation for sharing their teaching experiences with me. Without B. J., Michelle, Jack, and Steve this research would not have been possible.

In addition, my niece Allison served as inspiration to

conduct this research so that she and other children can experience the best teachers possible.

A special thanks to Dr. Fred Adams for unselfishly sharing his time; to my friends, especially Kay Shields, for their interest and support; to Tom Fix for teaching me to use a word processor; to Barbara Richardson for proof-reading my typing; to John Shore, Randy Lovett, and Jim Wilhelm for providing access to the computer; and to Dr. Bill Russell for convincing me to undertake the doctoral program.

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## CHAPTER I

### BURNOUT AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION

#### Origin and Definitions of the Term

Many sources in educational literature refer to the phenomenon of burnout as a primary reason teachers resign from classroom teaching positions. The application of this term first appeared in 1975 in an article by Herbert Freudenberger. Relatively little was written on burnout prior to this date.

Before 1974, the term burnout had not appeared in print, and in a few years it may no longer be used. However, the phenomenon clearly existed before the term was coined, and the phenomenon will still exist when the current popularity of "burnout" passes. (Cherniss, 1980, p. 9)

Several sources pinpoint that the conception of burnout occurred during the unrest of the sixties and the early seventies. "This was a painful period and the concerns have not grown smaller. It may be that burnout can pervade a culture and be the symptom of the times" (Lauderdale, 1982, p. 38).

It was in this new social climate of disillusionment and failure that the current interest in burnout was born. The wave of change that began in the sixties has ended, and its aftermath of broken promises and unfulfilled expectations has created a climate in which burnout seems rampant. Thus, the sixties gave us both the increased concerns with improvement and the great expectations that have led to much of the

burnout occurring in human service programs today.  
(Cherniss, 1980, p. 150)

Even though the term was used in the sixties, it did not become popular until the seventies. While working in a free clinic in New York, Freudenberger and his colleagues discussed the phenomenon they were experiencing which became known as burnout. The term is not exclusively used in the teaching profession. It extends to other human service professions and has been used in drug cultures as well as business and industry. One of the main differences between the types of burnout experienced in business and the burnout experienced in teaching and the other human services is primarily the cause of the phenomenon. Referring to professionals who experience burnout, Freudenberger explained "that we usually are fighting a battle on at least three fronts--we are contending with the ills of society, with the needs of the individuals who come to us for assistance, and with our own personality needs" (1975, p. 2).

In a search to find answers to many of the questions about burnout, Freudenberger researched and wrote about the feelings that he and other colleagues and clients experienced. He found that burnout manifested itself in highly motivated, dedicated, committed, and charismatic workers. He wrote that "it is precisely because we are dedicated and committed that we are likely, if we don't watch out, to burn out. The committed worker tends to take

on too much, for too long, and too intensely" (1975, p. 4). He did not advocate that one should not be committed and dedicated, only that "dedication and commitment do not mean killing yourself for the job" (p. 7). However, he cautioned that "there's a fine line between dedication and overdedication, commitment and overcommitment, and the helper has to be on guard against crossing it" (p. 158).

The term burnout gives one the impression of something on fire that lost its flame and will to burn. Lauderdale believed that burnout is a metaphor which can be equated to the life of a candle. "When the fire on the candle goes out, the essence is used up. It is no longer useful for its intended purposes. A new fire must be started" (1982, p. 27). Maybe it is preordained that people who are considered to be on fire in their jobs are symbolically like a candle in that they, too, burn brightly and give of their essence to their chosen professions. Once they have given all that they have to give, it may be time for them to seek a new candle and a new fire. Teaching is beginning to be characterized "more like a job people can handle for only a limited number of years before burning out" (Bardo, 1979, p. 254).

Regardless of which metaphor is used to describe burnout, whether it is a candle or a volcano, the one idea that holds true is that "there is no single definition of burnout that is accepted as standard" (Maslach, 1982b, p.

30). Burnout is defined in terms of processes, states, syndromes, realizations, and symptoms and it has been characterized as the result of prolonged stress. "When stress becomes severe, fatigue or burnout sets in" (D'Arienzo, Moracco, & Krajewski, 1982, p. 14). The definitions of burnout range from "a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward" (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980, p. 13) to a "syndrome of inappropriate behaviors towards clients and towards self" (Kahn, 1978, p. 61) to "a progressive loss of idealism, energy, and purpose experienced by people in the helping professions" (Edelwich & Brodsky 1980, p. 14) to "emotional exhaustion" (Maslach, 1978, p. 56) to "the painful realization that they no longer can help people in need, that they have nothing left to give" (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981, p. 15). Even though many variances in the definitions exist, burnout is "a subtle pattern of symptoms, behaviors and attitudes that are unique for each person" (Mattingly, 1977, p. 131).

Not only is there a divergence between authors on the meaning of the term, but also the aspects of life that burnout affects. These aspects include the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social areas. The only idea that seems to be held in common by the researchers is the belief that burnout varies from



individual to individual and occurs primarily in the helping professions where people work closely with other people.

Some of the characteristics of burnout exhibited by people include being "cranky, critical, angry, rigid, resistant to suggestions and given to behavior patterns that turn people off" (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980, p. 11). The characteristics reported by the various researchers vary in degree, nature, and duration. In general, some of the more prevalent and visible characteristics reported include high absenteeism, bursts of anger, low morale, lack of commitment, loss of energy, tiredness, desire for one vacation after another, late arrivals and early departures, extended breaks, and detachment from the job (Maslach 1982; Bardo, 1979; Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981; Daley, 1979; & Christensen, 1981). The research reviewed show that burnout can be evidenced not only in attitudinal and emotional exhaustion, but also in such physical symptoms as

being tired all of the time, sleeplessness, depression, and being physically run down. Teachers experiencing burnout often have minor physical maladies such as frequent colds, headaches, dizziness, or diarrhea. If unchecked, these ailments may turn into ulcers, colitis or asthma or they may cause loss of appetite or loss of sexual interest. (Truch, 1980, p. 4)

According to Maslach, many people who cannot cope with burnout try to suppress it with increased consumption of alcohol and/or drugs. For others, the response may often be "to quit and to get out, to change jobs, to move into some sort of administrative work, even to leave the profession

entirely" (Maslach, 1978, p. 57).

Burnout is generally believed to begin during the first few years of a career (Maslach, 1982, p. 60). Freudenberger found from his research that burnout actually occurred during the first year on the job. "Little is known about longer term patterns including whether or not an individual can burn out repeatedly over the course of an entire career" (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980, p. 18). However, Freudenberger believed that a person who burns out in one profession has the potential for burning out each time a new profession is started.

Burnout lays claim to some of the best people who tend to immerse themselves in their professions. It does not confine itself to the uncaring and mediocre. On the contrary, "the burn-out syndrome is a response to stress that is inherent and severe in child care work. It is not a response of the weak and unable" (Mattingly, 1977, p. 135). In fact,

if individuals entered a given profession . . . . with a cynical attitude, they would be unlikely to burn out; but if those who entered had a strong desire to give of themselves to others and actually felt helpful, excited and idealistic during their early years on the job--they would be most susceptible to the most severe burnout . . . . One of the great costs of burnout is the diminution of the effective service of the very best people in a given profession. (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981, p. 4)

#### Explanations for Teacher Burnout

Existing research demonstrated that burnout occurs at a

higher rate in single people than in married couples.

"Just as being unmarried is associated with a greater risk of burnout so is being childless" (Maslach, 1982, p. 60).

Dan Lortie's research in the area of teaching substantiates this sentiment. He found that teaching favorably lends itself to females who are married and who have children. Lortie's work further demonstrated that collectively, married females were more satisfied with teaching than either male teachers or their single counterparts. They were also more willing to return to the classroom once they had left, thus contributing to the high turnover in teaching.

Lortie also discussed the high turnover rate and pointed to the fact that people generally do not enter the field possessing a lifelong commitment to it. Lortie blamed this partially on the unstepped career line present in teaching. He described the profession as a "front loaded" career where salary schedules vary little between the beginning teacher and one with years of experience. In fact, only in teaching "a teacher with forty years of experience may be replaced by a rank beginner" (p. 161). Teaching is relatively "career less." Accordingly, the

lack of stages in the teaching career results in (1) the dominance of present versus future orientation among teachers and (2) a sense of relative deprivation among those who persist in teaching and work at above-average levels of effort. (p. 86)

This frustration is compounded by the fact that teachers have little power or control over their own profession.

"Burnout is high when people lack a sense of control over the care they are providing" (Maslach, 1982, p. 40).

Teachers are considered to be employed subordinates who "are defined as employees of school systems and are hired to implement board policies and administrative rulings"

(Lortie, 1975, pp. 164-165). The policies which they must enforce are made by school boards comprised of lay people who do not belong to the teaching profession. Teachers do not have control or even a voice in policy making, choice of schools, curriculum materials, or students. In other words teachers must take what they are given. "Teachers have not gained the legal right to govern their daily affairs" (p.

22). Yet, they are responsible for motivating, coordinating, stimulating, disciplining, and eliciting work from their immature charges. "Teachers are rarely asked to do anything. They are simply assigned to whatever needs doing" (Melaro, 1965, p. 96). Such tasks are sometimes impossible; nevertheless, teachers feel a sense of responsibility to reach each student. When this cannot be accomplished and high expectations go unfulfilled, teachers have feelings of self-doubt and worthlessness. "Unfulfilled expectations are the key to the start of the burnout process" (Lauderdale, 1982, p. 29).

A major source of burnout in human service programs is unfulfilled expectations and there are many historical roots of these expectations. The hope, idealism, and naivete of the reform-minded 1960s is one root. Another is the growing belief during the last 40 years that work should be more

than just a paycheck, that one's job also should be a vehicle for self fulfillment.(Cherniss, 1980, p.150)

As a result, burnout is "most likely to appear or will be highest where expectations and experiences are most divergent" (Lauderdale, 1982, p. 37). This is particularly true for teachers who enter the profession filled with zest, enthusiasm, and creative ideals to help students learn. They "expect to burn but not to burn out" (Christensen, 1981, p. 15). These characteristics are quickly dispelled when the new teacher realizes the many roles that must be played as part of the teaching job.

Typically, a teacher's assignments . . . might include selling tickets for and chaperoning sports events and dances; duty in the attendance office; hall, cafeteria, restroom, and bus supervision; sponsorship of clubs; and membership on P.T. A. committees. In all but the last, the teacher bears no responsibility to teach anything and retains only the responsibility for handling discipline (Gray, 1967, p. 97)

Many teachers trained in technical skills enter the profession without knowing all the roles and responsibilities that are required. They are not aware of the activities which impinge on actual instructional time. Some of these strains include clerical duties, large classes, classroom interruptions, time pressures, extracurricular duties, an abundance of papers to grade, and too much emphasis on fringe subjects as opposed to the basics. "Paper work is frustrating because it takes people away from the job they want to do" (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980, p. 138). Generally, teachers prefer spending their time with their

classes and resent time spent on schoolwide activities and concerns. When many teachers are faced with the stark realization of classroom life and when their chosen profession does not turn out to be what was anticipated, they experience the frustration of unfulfilled expectations. "The ensuing clash between cherished ideals and the real world is almost certain to lead to burnout" (Maslach, 1982, p. 134).

Teaching is an exhausting profession that wears many people down. "Teaching today can be infinitely depressing. It's an endless task and demanding" (Melaro, 1965, p. 205). Rather than being solely concerned with the subject matter to be delivered, the teacher's energies must be divided among many areas of responsibility.

And indeed, it comes as a shock to most teachers to find lesson plans deemed more important than lessons; to find themselves rated on the reports they turn in rather than the jobs they do in the classroom. Similarly, it disturbs people in business to find themselves spending time on everything but what they were hired to do. (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980, p. 165)

As a result of role conflicts and excessive time demands, frustrations build. "The frustrations of the classroom and the blind disregard by the administration for existing problems have driven as many people out of teaching as have the substandard salaries" (Melaro, 1965, p. xi).

What the teacher needs, plainly, is a job that one person can do. The job must be broken down, divided, simplified, clarified, and teachers must be released from the dismal, distorting loneliness of the classroom, to work with, see, and be seen

by other adults. (Hart, 1969, p. 153)

Lortie further described teaching as being a very confining job having limited contact with other adults. The cellular organization of schools referred to as the "egg crate" approach isolates teachers from each other and promotes neither interdependency nor collegiality. "For the major part of the school day teachers are isolated from other adults, a working condition shared by few other professions" (Alschuler, 1980, p. 7).

As a result, teachers work alone in their classrooms and are primarily dependent upon themselves. Lortie further reported that

Individualism supports presentism by inhibiting work with others in a search for common solutions. Teachers do not undertake the collegial effort which has played so crucial a role in other occupations. (Lortie, 1975, p. 212)

This lack of communication between teachers breeds a feeling of professional loneliness" (Robert, 1974, p. 7). For many people, burnout is hindered when friendships can be cultivated and viewpoints can be shared. "Time must be made for camaraderie. If it isn't, many valuable people will be lost" (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980, p. 160).

Another explanation why burnout occurs is that people in teaching and other human service professions are not trained in what to expect or how to handle situations which arise from the professions. "The inner landscape of many children is full of mines ready to explode upon careless

contact. Any insulting remark can set off an explosion" (Ginott, 1972, p. 149).

According to research by Sakharov and Farber, all the subjects interviewed "claimed a need to deal with 'human' issues at work. All agreed therefore that a holistic approach to training--in which interpersonal as well as technical skills are emphasized--would have better prepared them for the realities of their profession" (1983, p. 72). In addition, teachers are not trained to assess students, and they are not prepared to handle the emotions which are evoked through the assessment process. "The teacher's craft, then, is marked by the absence of concrete models for emulation, unclear lines of influence, multiple and controversial criteria, ambiguity about assessment timing, and instability in the product" (Lortie, 1975, p. 136).

Another frustration which characterizes the occupation and leads to burnout results from the lack of authorship. Teachers are not aware of the actual role that they play in the development of a child's life. "Teaching demands the capacity to work for protracted periods without sure knowledge that one is having any positive effect on students. Some find it difficult to maintain their self-esteem" (p. 144). When feedback is received, it is often difficult to assess. Generally, teachers do not trust compliments from their current students because they believe the comments are ways of soliciting better grades. "There



are occasional moments of satisfaction, but as the years pass, these become fewer, briefer. If you cannot tolerate this, you get out" (Melaro, 1965, p. 25). Praise and appreciative comments from former students are generally more believable because these students have nothing to gain. Even so, this feedback is few and far between and "the teacher must wait years to see the harvest of his labors" (Gray, 1967, p. 37). "Ambiguous jobs which provide little feedback to the individual about his or her performance are high burnout situations" (Lauderdale, 1982, p. 41). "When people do not see completion in their work, they may not believe they have significant impact" (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981, p. 117).

Teachers and students can become very close but these relationships are usually terminated at the end of a school year, "and that termination can be emotionally devastating for those who are too closely involved" (Maslach, 1982b, p. 34). Many teachers are not prepared to deal with the resulting stress.

"Training schools deal almost exclusively with cognitive materials, and traditionally no attention is given to developing skills for dealing with people or with the stresses experienced by the professionals" (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981, p. 53). Teachers are not trained in methods to recognize or cope with burnout. "Because of this lack of preparation for coping with the unique emotional stresses of

their work, many professionals are unable to maintain the caring and the commitment that they initially brought to the job, and then the process of 'burn-out' begins" (Maslach & Pines, 1977, p. 100).

In general, many teachers are not aware that they are experiencing burnout because the stages are so ill-defined. Like the definitions, there is not a general consensus of the stages of burnout or whether or not stages even exist. For some authors, "burnout can be plotted through three stages: Heating Up, Boiling, and Explosion" (Jones and Emanuel, 1981, p. 9). Cherniss reported that people who suffer from burnout "have traveled a path that led them from compassion to carelessness, from carelessness to callousness, and from callousness to cruelty" (1980, p. 6). Burnout can occur at different levels in one's life and manifests itself in different stages.

However, Lauderdale's research on burnout contained the concept of three stages: 1) confusion, 2) frustration, and 3) despair. The first stage reveals itself in a change in attitude and minor health complaints, and paves the way for the second stage, frustration, which sets in when a person believes that he is going nowhere. "There is no status, no recognition and . . . no hope of moving further ahead" (1982, p. 30). As the frustrations increase, so do the physical symptoms. When the third stage appears, the individual begins to feel that life has "no

meaning or value" and begins to withdraw and exhibit apathy. "Of all the stages of burn-out, apathy is the hardest to bounce back from, the one against which it is most difficult to intervene successfully" (Edelwich, 1980, p. 182). At this point one may redirect one's energies into a completely different profession or collapse into apathy. "That is the saddest choice, the one that ensures burnout. We slowly or rapidly collapse upon ourselves, extinguishing our dreams, mocking ourselves with criticism, and looking to the world with bitterness" (Lauderdale, 1982, p. 61). Ironically, "at none of these stages does the person necessarily conclude that he or she is burned out" (p. 31). Burnout is much easier to pinpoint in others than it is to see within oneself. "In every Burn out there is an element of blindness" (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980, p. 38). In one way, this can be attributed to the many roles each person must play in life. One may in fact burn out in one role and not be aware of the burnout. "Our self-perception, our own self-image, does not allow us to contemplate that what is going wrong may be a function of factors within ourselves" (pp. 6-7).

The stages of burnout according to Edelwich are very similar to those described by Lauderdale. By adding enthusiasm as the first stage of burnout, he advocated that "entering the helping profession is an intense emotional experience, with overtones of strong but diffuse

anticipation" (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980, p. 52). Many people enter their professions filled with enthusiasm. This enthusiasm can be sustained as long as the person is achieving success and receiving positive reinforcement. Just as Freudenberg warned, the danger occurs when the person becomes overcommitted and overdedicated. "The cycle of overcommitment is self-fulfilling, for the longer one neglects one's personal life, the more it deteriorates. One is thus left in a highly vulnerable position when the job ceases to furnish the rewards it once did" (pp. 62-63). These rewards served as fuel to feed the fire. Burnout occurs when the fuel supply is exhausted and the source must turn to itself for energy. It is when these energies are expended, not being replenished, that burnout occurs. Ironically,

There is some research and theory suggesting that the enthusiasm, idealism, and hope of the helper are critical ingredients in counseling, teaching, and even medical care. For instance, in an extensive review of the research on classroom teaching, Lortie (1973) found evidence suggesting that the enthusiasm of the teacher is strongly associated with higher rates of student learning. (Cherniss, 1980, p. 30)

Unfortunately, the characteristics that portray good teachers are the same characteristics exhibited by candidates for burnout. "Hard-working teachers exposed to prolonged stress in schools risk becoming neurotically frenzied, battle-fatigued, physically injured, or burned out" (Alschuler, 1980, p. 6).

The second stage of burnout outlined by Edelwich is stagnation which refers to "the process of becoming stalled after the initial burst of enthusiasm" (p. 71). The phenomenon prevails for people who are caught in a "struggle--to find meaning for oneself in an activity whose meaning is always just out of reach" (p. 74). When an individual cannot find meaning or feel a sense of accomplishment, stress mounts until eventually one feels that one has failed and is going nowhere. Remaining on the job while working diligently at it, people at this point seriously begins to question what the job is doing for them (p. 109). "At the heart of stagnation lies the feelings that one's career is at a dead end" (p. 88). When stagnation is allowed to grow it leads to the third stage--frustration. Actually for many people these two stages are closely interrelated and seem to blend.

Frustration is the core of Burn-out. In the stage of frustration, people who have set out to give others what they need find that they themselves are not getting what they want. They are not doing the job they set out to do. They are not "really helping." Leaving aside the low pay, long hours, and low status, there is a more basic frustration in the helping professions. It is inherently difficult to change people, and it is even more difficult under currently prevalent working conditions. (p. 110)

It is at this point that the person seeks either alternatives or allows the frustrations to grow until apathy, the fourth stage, sets in. "Apathy is no fun. When one's work is no longer meaningful, one naturally feels the

impulse to walk out" (p. 178).

The fifth stage of burnout in this schema is characterized as intervention. This stage does not and should not necessarily be ranked fifth. Ideally, it should prevail at the earlier stages in order to prevent burnout from occurring. Contrary to other writers, Edelwich stated that workshops and/or staff development are not the answers.

According to his research, workshops tend to build false illusions and "they leave the impression that individual good intentions can bring about organization change, and that organizational change is a prerequisite for individual change" (pp. 195-196). This transfers the responsibility for change from the individual to the organizations. When the organization does not change as the person who attended the workshop is expecting it to do, disappointment occurs. The workshop does not have a sustaining effect. "When the 'workshop high' fades, one is left either disillusioned or suspended in midair, waiting for the next workshop" (p. 197).

The authors on burnout do not agree on the coping strategies for the phenomenon. Just as strongly as Edelwich warned against workshops, Pines, Aronson, and Kafry advocated that workshops are excellent tools for providing avenues for people to share their problems, experiences, and arrive at solutions (1981, p. 192). Maslach suggested that

on an individual basis, people should work smarter instead of harder, set realistic goals, modify the way things are done, break away occasionally, take things less personally, accentuate the positive and get to know oneself (pp. 89-90). Maslach encouraged and outlined specifics for mental relaxation drills which include imagery training (p. 152).

Contrary to these recommendations, Lauderdale warned that "it may not always be a good idea to shift into transcendental meditation or yoga, which may cause further mental fatigue. Introspection is not what the burnt-out person needs" (1975, p. 22). Welch, Medeiros, and Tate also suggested physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual activities to counter burnout (1982, p. 29). Freudenberger recommended jogging, skating, swimming, tennis, dancing, or taking a vacation (p. 212). These suggested methods for coping with burnout generally deal with the symptoms rather than with the causes. Because burnout varies from individual to individual, there does not seem to be a convergence of opinion on ways to deal with the individual problems before they are manifested in the form of burnout. Continued research into the phenomenon may result in more specific recommendations.

From the existing research three primary sources which cause burnout have emerged. It is attributed to either one or a combination of the following factors: 1) the

individual, 2) the organizational situation, and/or 3) social and cultural change. Just as other issues dealing with the burnout process are controversial, the factors contributing to it are no exception.

Pines, Aronson, and Kafry stated "our work has made it clear that, in the vast majority of cases of burnout, the major cause lies in the situation" (1981, p. 6). "It occurs very frequently to a wide variety of people working in almost all the human services " (Pines, Aronson, and Kafry, 1981, p. 17). Michael Lauderdale attributed burnout partially to the role ambiguity that females must manage. "The susceptibility to burnout on the job may have personal historical roots in conceptions of what a woman can and should do" (Sakharov and Faber, 1983, p. 77). Even though this research indicated that burnout is predominant among females, other research is not as conclusive. Maslach's findings demonstrated that the phenomenon occurs within numerous types of people from a variety of backgrounds and "overall, men and women are fairly similar in the experience of burnout" (1982, p. 58).

Lauderdale also advocated that burnout occurs more frequently in highly educated people under thirty years of age. He attributed this to societal pressures experienced by the individual who has not established an identity and who is not securely anchored into traditional roles.



### Summary

The review of the literature on burnout indicates an area of controversy and confusion. The researchers cannot reach a convergence of opinion on a definition, stages leading to burnout, or methods for coping with the phenomenon. Burnout manifests itself differently in different people. It seems to be the result of extended negative stress which is brought on by various situational, social, and personal causes. "The term 'burnout' has extended to include not only all forms of work stress but also to nonwork spheres of life" (Maslach, 1982, p. 33).

According to Lauderdale, burnout occurs because our present society is undergoing an emergent paradigm shift. It should be noted that the term, paradigm shift, is also new resulting from the work of Thomas Kuhn in 1970 when he wrote . . . The Structure of the Scientific Revolutions. Lauderdale stated that we have moved from a traditional paradigm where roles and "the social structure, families, neighborhoods, the church, royalty were givens" (1982, p. 214) to a technocratic paradigm, under which the focus shifted from limited consciousness to individual consciousness. "Now under these terms, life and work must provide more than the simple basics of existence. There must be excitement, meaning fulfillment. Jobs must lead somewhere. A marriage must mean something. Each of us has a right to get something out of life" (p. 215). According to Cherniss, with the change in traditional roles,

"professional burnout is one more manifestation of this historical change in attitude about work" (Cherniss, 1980, p. 152). Many alternatives exist today which were not available years ago. As a result, roles are more conflicting and stress-producing in nature. Trying to balance traditional female roles with emerging career roles for women can produce stress. "Thus role conflict, role strain or role stress are all concerned with problems for the individual which arise as the result of role incompatibilities" (Grace, 1972, pp. 1-2). When questioned about their roles, "many working women described guilt and anxiety over conflicts between their work and home obligations" (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981, p. 33). "The potential of alternative roles is made possible by this modern paradigm and, in the same way, so is burnout" (Lauderdale, 1982, p. 216). It is when the frustrations of balancing roles mounts to the point of apathy that burnout ensues.

Because of the intensity of the external and internal conflicts that face the individual, the literature cannot adequately address the phenomenon the individual is experiencing. It can only speak of alienation, powerlessness, and loneliness in generalities. Cultural and societal pressures and instructional demands vary from person to person; consequently, the essence of these pressures are difficult to convey.

The phenomenon goes far beyond describing dissatisfaction in a job. In its complexity, it deals with the interconnectedness of life to work and work to life.

Lauderdale stated that

burnout is a relationship between events in life and the meaning and understanding the individual draws from life. Burnout is initiated by stress and alienation, but it will not occur until the individual experiences dissatisfaction with a given situation. As long as the situation is seen as a given, a condition of life, the individual may struggle, may feel pain, but not burn out. (1982, p. 63)

For this reason, it is extremely important for the individual teacher to be able to find meaning and a sense of purpose to help in understanding societal, cultural, and institutional demands which are prime causes of burnout. Burnout produces an "emptiness and meaninglessness of a degree not experienced before" (Cherniss, 1980, p. 13). One of the major inadequacies in the existing literature is that it does not specifically provide alternatives to help a person fill the emptiness and find meaning.

## CHAPTER II

### TEACHING AND THE PURSUIT OF MEANING

The literature on the phenomenon of burnout reviewed in Chapter I speaks to major life issues such as frustrations, alienation, and loneliness as experienced by many teachers. This literature provides much insight on how groups of professionals "burn out" as a result of not being able to cope effectively with these issues. However, detailed accounts of individual experiences are referred to only briefly and used to illustrate key points. Most of the literature is saturated with aggregate data which speak to collective groups.

One of the major inadequacies of the existing literature on burnout was found to be the lack of in-depth accounts from individual teachers on how they experience teaching and integrate it with their personal lives. Broad notions such as the lack of enthusiasm and the diminution of spirit add up to an inability for some teachers to continually direct their energies toward the classroom and find meaning in their professions. Furthermore, one can better understand the phenomenon of burnout by understanding the concept of meaning and how people make meaning out of their lives. The significance of meaning must be understood before anything

can be done to alleviate burnout and other problems which teachers face.

Through his research Arthur Jersild found that these issues were also important to teachers when they spoke of anxieties, loneliness, and a search for meaning in both their personal and professional lives. Jersild found that "the teacher's understanding and acceptance of himself is the most important requirement in any effort he makes to help students to know themselves and to gain healthy attitudes of self acceptance" (1955, p. 3). Hence, "What is needed is a more personal kind of searching which will enable the teacher to identify his own concerns and to share the concerns of his students" (p. 3).

One phase of Jersild's research was the Personal Issues Inventory which was completed by teachers. Approximately 60 percent of the teachers responding "indicated that meaninglessness was a problem on which they would like to have help in understanding themselves" (p. 79).

Jersild pointed out that meaning and commitment are important to teachers. "Where there is meaning, there is involvement. When something has meaning, one is committed to it. Where there is meaning, there is conviction" (Jersild, 1955, p. 78). It is "when meaning is lacking in one's work as a teacher, the self is uninvolved. The substance is lacking, and teaching is just an empty formality" (p. 79). When teaching is viewed as an empty formality and

teachers do not see the meaning for what they are doing, their feelings may lead to apathy and to a sense of frustration and impotence. John Gardner stated:

The renewal of societies and organizations can go forward only if someone cares. Apathy and lowered motivation are the most widely noted characteristics on the downward path. Apathetic men accomplish nothing. Men who believe in nothing change nothing for the better. They renew nothing and heal no one, least of all themselves. (1964, p. xiii)

Gardner further warned:

Unless we attend to the requirements of renewal, aging institutions and organizations will eventually bring our civilizations to smoldering ruin. Unless we cope with the ways in which modern society oppresses the individual, we shall lose the creative spark that renews both society and man. Unless we foster versatile, innovative and self-renewing men and women, all the ingenious social arrangements in the world will not help us (xiv)

To combat apathy which is identified as a stage of burnout, Pines and Aronson advocated that one should find meaning and significance on a personal level. Finding personal and professional fulfillment is one way to bring balance into one's life just as Richards, Gardner, and Allport have recommended. "If all the knowledge and advice about how to beat burnout could be summed up in one word, that word would be balance. Balance between giving and getting, balance between stress and calm, balance between work and home" (Maslach, 1982a, p. 147). Furthermore, "the basic message here is that giving of yourself must be balanced with giving to yourself" (p. 147). If this is not

done, the teacher will become just like Death Valley.

"Death Valley is a phenomenon of nature in which there is an outlet but no inlet. It simply gave up what it had and, since nothing new was coming in, it died" (Welch, Medeiros, & Tate, 1982, p. 13).

The search for meaning is a personal quest that is influenced by many factors including family experiences, culture, society, profession, personal convictions, and levels of understanding. Even though the search is influenced by these forces "the real encounter with the problem must take place in the privacy of each person's life" (Jersild, 1955, p. 7).

There are no easy answers to finding meaning in life or work. According to Jersild, "No one procedure alone will give the answer, since the search for selfhood . . . is pursued through all channels of experience as long as a person lives" (p. 85). For the purposes of this research the literature on meaning by Viktor Frankl was reviewed. Frankl developed an interpersonal philosophy which is intended to aid individuals in the search for meaning. His theory places the responsibility for detecting meaning on the shoulders of the individual. "To put it in Augustinian terms, man's heart is restless unless he has found, and fulfilled meaning and purpose in life" (Frankl, 1969, p. 55). He further stated "That meaning must be specific and personal, a meaning which can be realized by . . . one

person alone. For we must never forget that every man is unique in the universe" (1973, p. x).

Frankl, the survivor of four concentration camps, reflected on his own life in Man's search for meaning and relived his experiences from camp "life." He tried to find meaning for his life even under the most adverse conditions of the concentration camps. Through examples, deeds, and secret lectures, he encouraged fellow prisoners to also find "a full meaning in our life . . . in that practically hopeless situation" (p. 133). He encouraged others to believe that "one of the main features of human existence is the capacity to rise above such conditions and transcend them" (p. 207).

The purpose for one's life according to Viktor Frankl is more than just being in the world, but rather that the individual should find meaning in life. This philosophy of life, according to Frankl, is based upon three fundamental assumptions: 1) freedom of will; 2) will to meaning; and 3) meaning of life (1968, p. 2).

Under the first assumption of freedom of will, the individual is free to choose one's own way. Frankl feels that this freedom is limited by certain conditions that are biological, sociological, and/or psychological. Nevertheless, one "always remains free to take a stand toward these conditions; . . . always retains the freedom to choose his attitude toward them" (1968, p. 3). In other



words, Frankl believed and encouraged others to adopt the belief that "man is free to rise above the plane of somatic and psychic determinants of his existence" (p. 3). It is the ability to transcend the present situations or detach oneself from them that separates people from animals.

The terminology for the second assumption was specifically called will to meaning. Frankl believed that a "will" to meaning was different than a drive or need for meaning. When a person is driven toward meaning, the sole purpose of fulfillment is to rid oneself of the need or drive. As a result the individual "would no longer be really concerned with meaning itself but rather with his own equilibrium and thus in the final analysis, with himself" (1968, p. 8). "The meaning which a being has to fulfill is something beyond himself, it is never just himself" (p. 11). This philosophy goes beyond Abraham Maslow's theory which stated that there are five stages in an individual's development. The final stage in this hierarchy is self actualization.

Frankl stated that self-actualization is not a sufficient motivational theory which one could strive to attain. On the contrary, he feels that one must fulfill meaning at which time the individual becomes self-actualized. In other words, the goal for individuals should be to find meaning in life, and as part of the process, they will come to know and understand themselves.

Not only did he object to Maslow's theory but also to the pleasure principle which was a basis for Freudian psychology and the drive for power which was a significant component in Adlerian psychology. Frankl believes that power and pleasure are not methods to find meaning. "Pleasure is a by product or side effect of the fulfillment of our striving, but is destroyed and spoiled to the extent to which it is a goal or target. The more a man aims at pleasure by way of direct intention, the more he misses his aim" (pp. 6-7). Frankl believes that power is an end in itself and that the more an individual tried to attain pleasure and/or power, the further the mark was missed. Frankl believes that one could not struggle to make pleasure, self-actualization, or power. Taking this further, he said "In fact, it is my conviction that man should not, indeed cannot struggle for identity in a direct way; he rather finds identity to the extent to which he commits himself to something beyond himself, to a cause greater than himself" (p. 9). "In other words, meaning must not coincide with being; meaning must be ahead of being" (p. 12).

Even though Frankl's philosophy focused on an individual search for meaning, it is not only concerned with the individual. "Man is responsible for the fulfillment of the specific meaning of his personal life. But he is also responsible before something, or to something, be it society, or humanity, or mankind, or his own conscience" (p. 12).

The third assumption deals with the meaning of life. According to Frankl this meaning can be detected in several ways. Through a phenomenological analysis, he conveyed that "man not only finds his life meaningful through his deeds, his works, his creativity, but also through his experiences, his encounters with what is true, good, and beautiful in the world, and last but not least, his encounter with others, with fellow human beings and their unique qualities" (1968, p. 14).

Frankl insists that meaning can also be derived under the most adverse conditions. According to Frankl meaning in the deepest sense can be derived for some people through suffering.

In summary, Frankl believed that

life can be made meaningful in a threefold way; first through what we give to life (in terms of our creative works); second what we take from the world (in terms of our experiencing values); and third, through the stand we take toward a fate we no longer can change (an incurable disease, an inoperable cancer, or the like) (p. 15).

Through his theories on meaning for life, Frankl clearly believes that the individual has the right of choice and the responsibility to answer questions that life poses and to make decisions. He stated, "the meaning for our existence is not invented by ourselves, but rather detected" (1963, p. 157). He also said that the meaning derived from

life is not permanent in nature. On the contrary, it is always in transition, changing from "man to man, from day to day, from hour to hour" (1968, p. 57).

Frankl did not believe that meaning is attained from a life free from tension or that homeostasis is the answer to the fulfillment of meaning.

Man's primary concern does not lie in the actualization of his self, but in the realization of values and in the fulfillment of meaning potentialities which are found in the world rather than within himself or with his own psyche as a closed system.

What man actually needs is not homeostasis, but what I call noodynamics, i.e. that kind of appropriate tension that holds him steadily oriented toward concrete values to be actualized, toward the meaning of this personal existence to be fulfilled. This is also what guarantees and sustains his mental health; escaping from any stress situation would even precipitate his falling prey to the existential vacuum.

What man needs is not a tension-less state but the striving and struggling for something worth longing and groping for. What man needs is not so much the discharge of tensions as it is the challenge of the concrete meaning of his personal existence that must be fulfilled by him and cannot be fulfilled but by him alone. The tension between subject and object does not weaken health and wholeness, but strengthens them (1968, p. 68).

Man's search for meaning goes beyond self-actualization and balance "to a sphere of human existence in which man chooses what he will do and what he will be in the midst of an objective world of meanings and values" (p. 51). "It is spiritual freedom--which cannot be taken away--that makes life meaningful and purposeful" (1963, p. 106). According to Frankl, meaning abounds in every situation though at the

time all may seem meaningless. It is dependent upon the individual to determine meaning. This idea was applied in a study of experienced teachers by Dr. Albert Rubio. Rubio spoke to meaning when he stated, "If and when I can see myself as a meaningful participant my outlook is very different than when I see myself as being just another functioning part of a very impersonal team" (1979, p. 7). When this cannot be accomplished, the inner aimlessness and emptiness experienced by the person is characterized as an "existential vacuum" (1963, p. 167) that "manifests itself mainly in a state of boredom" (p. 169). Not only are boredom and apathy the primary causes of existential frustration, they are also characterized as being predominant symptoms of burnout.

"For many individuals who work in the human services the main problem is not overload, conflict or ambiguity, but boredom. Their work lives lack challenge, variety and meaning" (Cherniss, 1980, p. 92). To this statement Frankl would add that meaning lies within the work situation and it is up to the individual to detect this meaning. Also, he would state that when the person is in a state of existential vacuum, meaning cannot be found. When people close their eyes to a situation, their lives actually become meaningless. Hence, opportunities that actually exist are sometimes overlooked.

Frankl warned that people, especially in America, are

living life in the fast lane; for these people getting there is the goal and the journey is missed. In fact, "the less one is aware of a goal the faster he tries to cover the road" (1969, p. 97).

Leo Buscaglia reemphasized this belief when he reflected on his own life in the introduction to The way of the bull.

I was also taught that life had no meaning unless it was goal-oriented and that my life, to be meaningful, had to be spent in creating goals, making decisions about those goals and charging toward them, through mud and muck if necessary, to achieve them.

Time and experience revealed to me that life was a trip, not a goal. That often one became so fixed on the end that he totally missed life along the way, and found, only too late, that when he had scaled the mountain there was only another mountain, and another, and another. What a pity that he had never stopped long enough to breathe the new, clean, fresh air and admire the spectacular view. I had to question: If life is a continual trip, does it matter if one ever "gets" anywhere? (1973, p. iii)

Unfortunately, teaching is a profession where one must push for goals that have been predetermined by curriculum planners and policy makers. The teacher must constantly adhere to a bell system and be subject to unexpected interruptions and disruptions. The resulting pressures create frustrations and stress. "The combination of these job-related and personal pressures makes stress the number one health problem" (Alschuler, 1980, p. 8). When teachers are caught "in an institution where the bureaucratic mentality is so strong, innovation and creativity are

stiffled . . . work . . . loses much of its vitality over time. The job becomes less interesting and less fulfilling" (Cherniss, 1980, p. 106). Trapped between trying to make viable meaning out of the situation and completely giving up, the teacher struggles.

Some of the primary causes of this predicament include enforcement of school policies which teachers may not agree with; working with difficult students, parents and/or administrators; having too many roles to play; and integrating personal lives with their work lives. Feelings of entrapment may result. According to Frankl, people do not have to allow such feelings of entrapment to envelop their lives. "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: The last of the human freedoms--to choose one's own way" (Frankl, 1963, p. 104). "One of the main features of human existence is the capacity to emerge from and rise above all such conditions--to transcend them" (1968, p. 61).

In teaching, there are times when a teacher becomes so inundated with work that a way out of the stressful situations seems very dim, if not impossible. In such instances a teacher needs someone who can be of help. A possible alternative would be a program to encourage individual teacher growth which focuses on personal and professional fulfillment. When the uniqueness of the teacher becomes of primary importance and when teachers are considered to be professionals, teaching will acquire a new

meaning. In such an environment, teachers will feel free to request assistance in specific areas without placing their jobs in jeopardy and individual needs could be met in a manner which is nonthreatening to the professionalism of the teacher and burnout could possibly become a term of the past.

"Man's search for meaning is not pathological, but rather the surest sign of being truly human. Even if this search is frustrated, it cannot be considered a sign of disease. It is a spiritual distress, not a mental disease" (1968, p. 72). When teachers believe they are considered to be and are treated as professionals their lives take on different meanings. In the words of Frankl, "each man is unique and each man's life is singular; not one is replaceable nor is his life repeatable" (p. 17).



### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY FOR THIS RESEARCH

##### Qualitative and Quantitative Research

This phase of the research will focus on intensive interviews with four career-status teachers who resigned from their classroom teaching positions. It was desired to learn the reasons why they left teaching and to find out if these teachers believed that they suffered from the phenomenon of burnout and if they believed the school systems where they were employed could have helped them avoid terminating their careers. Specifically, it was desired to focus attention on the relationships between the reasons these teachers resigned and how they experienced teaching. "This involves the somewhat unfashionable view that the teacher is as important as the child in the educative process and that there is as much need for systematic study of the problems and conflicts of the teacher role as of the pupil role" (Grace, 1972, p. ix).

Specifically this aspect of the research will investigate individual reasons why career-status teachers terminate their teaching careers and attempt to gain further insight into the following questions and issues:

1. Why are career-status teachers terminating their careers early?

2. Do they believe they suffered from the phenomenon of burnout?
3. How extensively did these teachers integrate teaching with their personal lives?
4. Were these teachers able to derive meaning from their teaching experiences? If not, did this contribute to their unhappiness?
5. Do they believe that terminating their careers could have been avoided?

Because of the nature of these issues, the traditional, quantitative mode of inquiry was not appropriate for this research. Quantitative research, often referred to as a natural science or positivist paradigm, sets up selective experiments and/or processes to test predetermined hypotheses. The tests may be conducted in a controlled laboratory or they may be in the form of surveys or questionnaires. Once the research has been conducted, the results are tabulated into quantitative, measurable terms. Because the research is intended to be objective and conducted within specific parameters, many valuable aspects of the phenomenon may go undisturbed and undetected.

To illustrate, a teacher survey in the form of questions requiring either a short or one word response may not be able to address classroom reality. Because of the complex nature of issues like emotions and feelings, their essence is difficult to capture accurately in the form of impersonal questionnaires. These surveys often lose the intensity and depth of feelings that the research subject is

experiencing. When surveys and questionnaires are the sole basis for the research, gaps are left in the findings thus giving a fragmented picture of what is actually transpiring. Many key issues such as alienation, loneliness, powerlessness, confinement, isolation, role ambiguity, and loss of meaning are subjective in nature and are not easily addressed in a checklist format.

Open-ended questioning, a form of qualitative research takes into account the difficulties of conveying innermost feelings. The interviewer can go into detail with the interviewee to reveal specific concerns, and issues which may not be addressed in a questionnaire because of denial or misunderstanding of the question being asked can be confronted through qualitative research.

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative inquiry does not operate on a selective, predetermined set of truths. While recognizing the uniqueness of the individual and the situation, the researcher is not limited by predetermined questions. The research is more flexible and when unexpected issues arise, they can be investigated. Ray Rist defined qualitative research as "'direct observation of human activity and interaction in an ongoing, naturalistic fashion'" (Rogers, 1984, p. 86). The subjects of the research are not treated as objects or numbers. Unlike the positivist paradigm, qualitative research recognizes that realities vary from individual to individual and situation

to situation and these realities are constantly changing. Accordingly, the individual is an integral part of the events that shape reality (Pearce, 1971). "Every reality is equally real. No single reality contains more of the truth than any other" (Mehan & Wood, 1975, p. 31). Qualitative research allows for and indeed celebrates the uniqueness of the individual. As a result the individual becomes the focus of the research rather than a hypothesis. "It is virtually impossible to image any human behavior that is not heavily mediated by the context in which it occurs." (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 62). "The qualitative researcher's 'laboratory' is the social setting under question as it is functioning; one does not alter variables or otherwise change the situation under study" (Rogers, 1984, p. 87).

The basis for the data collection is very flexible and nonmanipulative. Rather than using a set of questions that have been predetermined by researchers who are detached from the phenomenon under investigation, qualitative researchers use their initial observations as well as other data to formulate the research questions. These questions actually change and develop as the study progresses. This research approach is more comprehensive and thorough; thereby, reducing the limiting factors that prevail in traditional quantitative research. "Interpretive procedures 'fill in' the essential incompleteness of normative rules" (Mehan & Wood, 1975, p. 114).

The qualitative paradigm for conducting research is not only supplying data which answers many questions about life, it is providing data influencing alternatives that may revolutionize the field of education. Rogers stated, "The strident conflict between qualitative and quantitative researchers has softened. . . . If we are to answer questions as fundamental as 'do schools educate?' we shall have to make intelligent and sensitive use of all the tools at our disposal" (Rogers, 1984, p. 105).

Through his work, Max Weber tried to bridge the gaps between these two basic methods of research. "His work as a whole represents one of the most masterful attempts to date to integrate the divergencies apparent in his time within the science of sociology" (Bruyn, 1966, p. 6). Weber's theory was based upon the belief that the researcher must enter "into the lives of the people he studied to seek personal understanding (Verstehen)" (p. 7). He did not refute the basis for either the scientific paradigm or the interpretive mode of inquiry. He believed the "objective world of explanation with the subjective world of understanding should be merged" (Rubio, 1979, p. 67).

Though Weber made the first attempt to merge the methods of research, his efforts were not without fault or criticism. One major question left unresolved was the methodology which should be employed for such research.

According to Bruyn, the methodology was not as obscure

as it seemed to be to many people. He purported that the methodology can be observed in research studies in the mid-1800s which used the participant observer mode of inquiry.

Two schools for conducting research have been discussed, quantitative and qualitative.

The former was the traditional method of the "hard" sciences and the life sciences; it has been widely adapted and emulated in the social-behavioral sciences as well. It is so commonly believed to be 'the' method that it has acquired a patina of orthodoxy. The latter is an emergent paradigm that has begun seriously to challenge the orthodoxy. It is our position that the naturalistic paradigm is more useful for all social behavioral inquiry and certainly for responsive naturalistic evaluation. In any case, the choice between paradigms in any inquiry or evaluation ought to be made on the basis of the best fit between the assumptions and postures of the paradigm and the phenomenon being studied or evaluated. (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, pp. 55-56)

For the purposes of this research the qualitative, naturalistic paradigm is more appropriate. Specifically, this mode of inquiry has been applied in interviewing four former career-status teachers to investigate why they resigned and how they experienced teaching and the teaching profession. "The way people talk about their lives is of significance, that the language they use and the connections they make reveal the world they see and in which they act" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 2).

By the use of interpretive, qualitative methods of inquiry, the answers were sought to more penetrating questions on

beliefs, attitudes, meaning, and purposes which cannot be addressed through written questionnaires. "R. K. Merton has suggested that the impersonal and limited nature of questionnaires as instruments of social research makes it necessary to use, where possible, interviews in order to explore the thinking, nuances and qualifications which lie behind the objective responses" (Grace, 1972, p. 33). It is through the interview approach that the uniqueness and realities of the individual are revealed.

Understanding the subjective world of people within a given field calls for long detailed and open-ended interviews which are costly in time and money. The benefits of intensity are purchased at the cost of scope. Yet it is surprising how much one can learn about an occupation without using complex measures. (Lortie, 1975, p. ix)

To further illustrate the limitations of the quantitative research paradigm, Mehan and Wood referred to the testing procedures that prevail in our present educational system as instruments which yield distorted results. Because a student's "reality" greatly differs from the realities of the adults who author the tests, a true measure cannot be determined. The interpretation of reality is central to being able to answer the questions in the mode in which they were asked. Ironically, reality varies from individual to individual and from situation to situation. In other words reality is subject to human interpretation and to the influences and experiences one has had in life. "Reality is not a fixed entity" (Pearce, 1971, p. 3).

The detrimental effects of empirical research on education are further developed by James Macdonald when he warned of the danger that empirically measured concepts such as intelligence, motivation, readiness, and learning can be "reified into 'solid' facts, rather than what they are--interpretive concepts" (1982, p. 6).

To illustrate this point, throughout the educational system standardized test results are not viewed primarily as interpretive information. Rather the results are usually used to determine grade level, placement into special programs, and ability grouping. If the student had a "bad" day when the test was administered or if the test did not measure the student's area(s) of strength, the results may not present a true picture of the student's abilities. Unfortunately, these distortions or "solid facts" are the basis for determining the ability and competence level of the child that influence the direction the child will take during the remaining school career.

Both teachers and students suffer from the incomplete results of quantitative research. This is made evident when quantitative evaluation forms become the primary basis for determining career status and merit pay for teachers. When this occurs, many issues and important functions performed by the teacher are not taken into consideration. By reducing teaching to a statistic, the humanness and uniqueness of the individual and the situation are ignored.



Statistical evaluations often portray distortions and are reflective of the effectiveness of the teacher.

The quantitative or natural science paradigm for doing social research did not supply the answers to the questions that were asked. In recent decades there has been a renewed interest in the qualitative mode of inquiry for conducting research in the social-behavioral areas. By using interpretive, qualitative methods of inquiry, researchers are personally finding answers by becoming participants in their research rather than separating themselves from it. This mode of inquiry is "more useful for all social-behavioral inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 56).

#### Roots of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research "claims descent from a variety of methodological and theoretical progenitors, phenomenology, hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, anthropological ethnography, the verstehen tradition in social research, and critical sociology" (Shapiro, 1983, p. 1).

Florian Znaniecki believed that scientific data should be collected through different modes of inquiry when dealing with natural versus cultural phenomena. The book he coauthored with William I. Thomas, The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, was a historical turning point for social-behavioral inquiry (Bruyn, 1975). Writing in 1934,

Znaniecki directly criticized Emile Durkheim, the father of quantitative research, when he stated that

If the scientist tried to study the cultural system in a manner analogous to his studies of the material or natural system as though it existed separately from human experience, the system would disappear and leave only a disjointed mass of natural things and processes without any similarity to the reality he had hoped to investigate. (As quoted in Rubio, 1979, p. 66)

He did not believe that the empiricist paradigm should be applied to human activity. He further stated "'There is one way of experiencing an object; it is to observe it personally. . . . You cannot fully recognize what they are doing until you do it yourself'" (Rubio, 1979, p. 71). This concept is in direct opposition to the positivist paradigm which proclaims the duality of the inquirer and the subject. It should be noted that even though the positivist research boasts the separation of the inquirer from the subject, "investigators are human beings subject to all the usual foibles and biases" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 56). Even though the data may be collected objectively, the interpretation of this data is still subject to the researcher's interpretation.

As cited earlier, phenomenology is one of the roots of the qualitative paradigm. The father of early phenomenology was Edmund Husserl who advocated that science had replaced nature with abstractions. He further believed that "If we wish to explain human beings, we must relate the activities

and findings of the human sciences to the basic concepts with which we understand and organize our everyday experience" (Kneller, 1984, p. 30).

Later phenomenologists included Alfred Schutz, who believed that the world was a product of human creation (Synder, 1982). "Schutz' work has provided the underpinnings of a phenomenological revival in research that has focused more and more on the exploration of the taken-for-granted aspects of the everyday world and the intersubjective constituting of reality" (Shapiro, 1983, p. 1). According to Schutz (cited in Bruyn, 1966), the world in which we live is not a private one. On the contrary it is subject to nature and the culture to which we are born.

The qualitative paradigm draws upon the hermeneutical process which dates back to the seventeenth century. Originally, the term hermeneutics was applied to the interpretation of biblical texts. Through the years this meaning of hermeneutics was expanded from the interpretation or translation of the texts to include "greater understanding that motivates and satisfies us" (Macdonald, 1981, p. 5). According to Mehan and Wood, "interpretation is symbolic activity," while "understanding refers to the sense people have every moment that they occupy a particular here and now" (1975, p. 193). Schleiermacher is credited with defining hermeneutics as the study of understanding (Palmer, 1969). His work was continued and expanded by Wilhelm

Dilthey in the nineteenth century. Dilthey believed that hermeneutics went beyond the scientific understanding to include the interpretation of life through historical understanding. Hermeneutics further evolved through the contributions made by Martin Heidegger in the twentieth century. Drawing upon phenomenology, Heidegger deepened the concepts of hermeneutics when he stated that both interpretation and understanding were not merely methods of describing man. On the contrary, they were the foundations of man's being.

The hermeneutical process was a controversial issue through the centuries. The controversy centered around the way one interprets. Some people believed that all interpretations are objective in nature while others believed that all interpretations are subjective. The meaning of the term ranged from interpreting biblical texts to being the foundation of life. Nevertheless, Macdonald stated, "The hermeneutical process is universal and basic for all inter-human experience, both of history and the present movement, precisely because of the fact that meaning can be experienced, even where it is not actually intended" (Macdonald, 1981, p. 16).

Ethnomethodology, a more recent tradition for conducting quantitative research, also draws upon hermeneutics. "Ethnomethodology claims that structures are constituted by social structuring activities" (Mehan &

Wood, 1975, p. 192). Unlike the positivist paradigm, ethnomethodology is not in search of a priori truths. Instead, it is a method used to explain the practices and realities of the world. Mehan and Wood refer to ethnomethodology as a "form of life to be lived" (p. 6).  
Qualitative Research Applied to this Dissertation

To conduct this phase of the investigative inquiry, a selection was made of four former career-status teachers who resigned from classroom teaching positions within the last two years and who have a story to tell. "All human beings have an innate need to tell and hear stories and to have a story to live by" (Cox, 1973, p. 9). This story is one that should be heard about how these teachers experienced teaching and why they left the profession. According to Frankl, "Only the man inside knows" (1963, p. 8). To accurately document their stories, each interview was recorded on a cassette recorder and the sessions were transcribed. Each person was interviewed separately and privately and allowed to choose the location for the interview. To ensure that the essence of the interview was correctly and accurately captured, each interviewee was asked to review the interpretations of what was said. Each interviewee was encouraged to make any corrections necessary in the transcribed text. When the information obtained from the initial interview was not sufficient, the person was contacted to obtain additional information or

clarify specific points. All data were held in the strictest confidence to ensure that individual rights were not violated. To guarantee anonymity, the names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms selected by the interviewee.

Even though the actual interviews were open-ended by design, the questions and issues outlined at the beginning of this chapter were kept in mind. An effort was made not to influence or lead the interviewee, but to listen for key words and phrases which reoccurred throughout the interview, with particular awareness of nonverbal gestures and voice inflections. The four interviewees were extremely cooperative and open. They did not try to hide or suppress their views or interpretations of their experiences.

The insights gained from the four interviews were compared with those from existing literature. Each interview was interpreted independently as were all the interviews collectively. The final chapter presents an analysis of how the interviews provided insights to the questions being investigated.

One intention of this research was to document the stories of four career-status teachers who terminated their careers early, so that other teachers who share their feelings and concerns can know that they are not alone, they have not failed, and their concerns are shared by some of the best.

"When individuals realize that they are not alone, but part of a larger social experience, they can reach outward for solutions as well as solidarity" (Sakharov & Faber, 1983, p. 79).

#### Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to four former career-status teachers who were accessible for the interviews and who were willing to share their stories. This research reflects the uniqueness of the individuals interviewed and is not intended to be a representative sample of the teaching profession or of teachers from a particular geographical area or school system. The research speaks to issues and concerns that confront other teachers in their lives. Furthermore, it is not directed at or a reflection of the feelings of a particular segment of the teacher population. The research is not designed to address all the issues that are prevalent in teaching today, but only the issues and questions which were set forth as the focus of the dissertation.

#### Terms Defined

Definitions of terms often vary from one source to another depending upon who is being read. To illustrate, the word "'teacher' is a title shared by all. It tells us nothing about qualifications, not even formal qualifications, for tens of thousands who hold the job and the title do not meet their state and legal requirements, or even if they are 'certificated' may be assigned to work for which they would

not be acceptable according to the published standards" (Hart, 1969, p. 39). For the purposes of this research the following definitions of terms will be used:

Career-status teacher -- A teacher who holds a valid state certificate, who earned at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, and who has attained tenure.

Burnout -- "To deplete oneself. To exhaust one's physical and mental resources. To wear oneself out" (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980, p. 17).

Meaning -- Meaning is unique for each individual and "differs first from man to man and second from day to day, indeed, from hour to hour" (p. 54).

Career termination -- Resignation from a classroom teaching position.

Story -- Individual accounts from former career-status teachers about how they personally and professionally experienced teaching.

It should be noted that all terms are subject to individual interpretations and study. For the teachers who will be interviewed, the real meanings of these terms will emerge as they tell their stories.



## CHAPTER IV

### INTERVIEWS

#### Introduction to B. J.

The first interview was with B. J., a single female in her mid-thirties who resigned from teaching two years ago. She was the only child of "two loving, trusting; and hardworking parents," and she was reared in a small, rural town. She was an excellent student, earning many awards and honors throughout her years in school. She prides herself in being active, helping others, and achieving high standards. B. J. characterized herself as a goal-oriented person who strives for the highest goals attainable. She said, "I can never recall any moments in my home when there were no goals for which to work." She was not only an active member and leader in numerous clubs and organizations at school, but also at church and in the community.

B. J. is a remarkable woman who could easily pose a threat to co-workers just by being in their presence. She would not intentionally intimidate anyone, but her style and readiness to learn and work could challenge many people. She stated that she is the type of person who not only likes to see things happen, she enjoys playing a major role in making them happen.

B. J. was selected for this research because of my awareness of her track record in teaching. We received our undergraduate and graduate degrees from the same university and we shared common majors. Even though we never taught in the same school system, our professional lives have been in continuous contact. I learned of her excellent teaching record from co-workers and from people in the State Department of Public Instruction. Needless to say, I was very surprised to learn that after years of teaching in the regular program and in a vocational program, she said goodbye to the teaching profession. I had always believed that she would be the last to leave because teaching was her life. She seemed to live for her students. They were more than students to her and her time was their time. I have never known anyone to give as much to teaching as she did. Yet after 11 years, she changed professions. Knowing her background and having kept up with her career for years, I was curious to find out why she left a secure position in her hometown to take an administrative position which netted less money at a four-year university.

#### B. J.'s Story

During the intensive interview, B. J. spoke of teaching with the greatest sense of pride. It was apparent that the word teaching was sacred to her. Throughout the conversation, it was obvious that although she was no longer on the payroll as a teacher, she still held teaching close

to her heart. In fact, when we talked about the criteria for a good teacher, she expressed repeatedly that one must be sincere and truly have a desire to teach. This often requires going beyond the job expectations and "the call of duty." She believed that she was this kind of teacher and pointed out that she had been selected as the teacher of the year in her school and was the first runner-up in the district. At this point in the interview, she shared a scrapbook, approximately five inches thick, which held certificates, awards, certification of professional affiliations, and letters from administrators, students, and representatives from the state agency; results from local, state, and district competitions with her students; her philosophical statement; photographs; and many other memorabilia from teaching.

B. J. stated that an effective teacher must be a good role model and consequently she lived her professional and personal lives by this high standard. She described an effective teacher by saying, "I think you have to be dedicated to the profession and many times that means going beyond the call of duty. . . your number one interest has to be the betterment and the welfare of that child you are teaching." She continued to say that the effective teacher needs to be sensitive to student needs and "have a listening ear." To this she added, "An effective, dedicated teacher should have a positive attitude and should want to do a good

job and not feel that they have a job in hand regardless."

Following the discussion on effectiveness, I asked if teaching was what she thought it would be. Her initial response was an affirmation of the profession: "I guess for the most part it was, because all my life I dreamed of being a teacher." As she continued to reveal her feelings, however, she said, "I think that the disappointing part and one of the most frustrating parts of teaching is that . . . I was not aware of all the paperwork and the other duties that were expected of me. I was never told in college or thought of having hall duty, lunch duty, bus duty, all these little extra duties that come as part of the teaching responsibilities throughout the day." The conversation flowed into "So I think (pause) from that standpoint, teaching was not what I thought it would be. If I could have always just been responsible for my classroom and teaching all day long, then it would have been great."

Her initial response was as though she knew the way the question should be answered by society's standards. She knew that she was supposed to say all good things about children and the teaching profession. However, as she heard what she actually said and compared this idealistic teaching experience to her teaching reality, she changed her answer. She used this approach in answering many of the questions in the interview.

From the tone of her voice, I picked up a sense of

resentment that she had so many assignments and responsibilities beyond being a teacher; i.e., she resented not being able to spend as much time as she needed to prepare for classroom presentations, job placements, and visitations. In further describing her responsibilities and duties, B. J. stated that she had sponsored the Future Business Leaders of America for eleven years, but did not resent the time spent with this organization because she felt that it was an extension of her business classes. After sharing a record of accomplishments by students in the organization, she concluded the summary by saying, "My experience in that particular extracurricular activity was a very rewarding experience. And I certainly enjoyed every minute that I spent with those students."

Because of her willingness to "go beyond the call of duty," she believed that the school system took advantage of her. As she talked, it was obvious that she had forgotten or at least had put out of her mind many of the duties that she was assigned. One remembrance lead to another and the entire list was not only extensive, but also quite impressive. During the eleven years, she sponsored the cheerleaders, directed an honor club, advised the yearbook staff, and chaired the business department. In addition, she worked with students in typing and reproducing all programs for the various functions throughout the school such as sports banquets, chorus concerts, and band concerts.

She also worked at the football games and basketball games as well as helping with the preparation of graduation exercises in preparing the diplomas.

"My principal called on me for a lot of his personal letters in that our secretary did not always have time to meet all of his needs." She continued to recall assignments, "The year that we went through Southern Association Accreditation, I was employed at minimum wage (this seemed to really irritate her) for the whole summer to type and reproduce every report that was prepared for our whole school in presenting or in being visited and evaluated for Southern Association Accreditation. So this involved six weeks of working eight to five, Monday through Friday."

Not only did she have to perform secretarial tasks for the school principal, but also for the system's superintendent. "Our superintendent lost his number one support person in his office due to a sudden death. I was called in. It was at the end of the year and I was called in to help get the books ready for the auditors and work from three o'clock until ten or eleven every night for several weeks in order for him to be able to come through this." It should be noted that the additional hours were after she had taught a full day of classes.

B. J. pointed out that she was a "good old work horse" and felt to a certain degree that the school system took advantage of her. "Because I realize that they do not have

the control over salary and maybe compensating me for all the extra time and work that I gave to my school system. But I feel like there are other ways which an administration can show appreciation." She paused and then continued, "But of course, their feeling is they are scared to show any partiality to any teacher because of the feeling that it will promote among other teachers and I feel that this is unfair." This concerned her deeply and she said, "I would have been willing to have done even more than I did, had I felt like it was truly appreciated and there was some means of compensation." She was willing to do even more than she was doing. She summarized her feelings by saying, "Along the way sometimes I think the administration would be able to keep their teachers if they showed this appreciation along the way, instead of taking you for granted."

At this point some of the frustrations about teaching began to show and she returned to the subject of extracurricular activities. B. J. stated that she felt teachers should only be responsible for those activities that directly related to and enhanced the educational process. "However, I do not feel like we are responsible from a social activities standpoint for things such as dances . . . Valentine's dances, junior-senior proms, sophomore dances or any dance that they (students) decide they would like to have after a ballgame or Christmas or something of that nature." Once again extracurricular

activities were being revealed that had been suppressed. "I feel that we are responsible for educating the total student. I feel that means helping them become a well-rounded person and able to be a productive citizen in tomorrow's society." She continued by saying that it should be the responsibility of the parents to serve as chaperons for dances and other social activities.

While we were talking about dances, a major issue surfaced and one of her major concerns emerged. "I think that part of what is wrong in today's classroom is that the discipline problems are a result of the breakdown of the family unit. Until parents are concerned for the welfare of their children as a child as well as a student in the classroom everyday, then we are going to continue to have problems." She further stated, "You cannot force a child to learn, to study. That individual has to be motivated and understand the reasoning behind the need for education. And if parents have not instilled a worthwhile value system at that point in time, it is very difficult to go back and retrain."

She seemed highly disillusioned with the lack of parental support in schools, saying at one point, "You have to have the support of parents all the way through the school years in order to do the kind of job in the classroom that we as teachers should want to do. And as long as the attitude of parents is that they have lost control and cannot be of influence and have no control over their own



child, how can I as a teacher be responsible for the role of parent, teacher, doctor, counselor, and all the other roles that are mandated by today's society?"

When asked what role a teacher should play, the answer was very simple and straight forward: "The role a teacher should play is the role of education." However, she quickly added, "But I think that I as a teacher have a responsibility of being a good role model on my everyday living, my value system, my morals." Again she stated that she did not feel that a teacher should play the role of counselor, dad, mother, doctor, nurse, etc.

Our conversation flowed from the roles she played back to her initial expectations of teaching: "So I think (pause) from that standpoint, teaching was not what I thought it would be. If I could have always just been responsible for my classroom and teaching all day long, then it would have been great." Her feelings of frustration and stagnation were further evidenced when she said, "I realized that there was a big world out there and I felt that my world was very limited in the classroom."

One of the reasons she felt limited was because she was not treated like a professional and this really was a problem for her. She said that she felt teachers were not treated like professionals and she personally resented this lack of professional treatment. "I think that if you're really a strong, dedicated, effective teacher, you want to be

considered a professional." On the other hand, she did not believe that all teachers were professionals.

As a result of her dedication and commitment, she resented other teachers who rigorously adhered to the eight-hour school day. She believed that a sense of camaraderie existed between those teachers who gave the extra time to become involved in school and professional activities. To B. J., the teachers who worked the eight-hour day and left promptly at 3:30 each day were working a job rather than being part of a profession. It was evident that a division existed between the two groups of teachers. B. J. believed that because some of the teachers did not carry their share of what she considered to be the total school day, she and other teachers had to pick up the slack. She also believed that she was frequently called upon because she was single. This was a point of contention for her, because she believed that she should have been compensated more than married teachers with children, who refused to do the extra duties required beyond the regular school day. "We have too many teachers who are in the teaching profession because of the time schedule, the hours each day, because of family responsibilities and being able to be off with the children in the summertime, be home in afternoon when they come home from school. They're in the profession for personal reasons, for selfish reasons, convenience factors and . . . for the security." She

believed that such teachers were not professionals and were doing an injustice to the education profession as well as to the students in their classes.

She pointed out that these teachers should not receive good evaluations. "In order to make teaching a profession, I think administration is going to have to bite the bullet, evaluate their teachers based on their performance in the classroom. I think the concept of tenure was initially a good concept, but I think it has destroyed our proper attitude in teaching."

We began to discuss attitudes in teaching, especially the one she held toward the end of her career. At this point we began to discuss burnout. "Burnout to me means being involved in a job or a career field to the point that you feel you have given it 150% and you become totally dissatisfied to the point you are no longer effective in what you're doing." Unfortunately, she believed that she had reached a point of burnout. By her own admission, she was in a rut and found herself growing more and more interested in what the outside world offered. She began yearning for personal growth beyond the teaching world. She said, "I had not been actively seeking another career field but I was everyday thinking about other possibilities, listening for other opportunities, and realizing that I needed to make a move because I wanted to change careers and I wanted to do it while I was at the peak of my teaching

career." She said that she did not want to become complacent and just work a job like many of the other teachers with whom she worked. This was important to her. "I had achieved the teacher of the year award which was one of my goals and I wanted to move into another career field before I became ineffective in teaching."

The opportunity to terminate her classroom position occurred during the summer after her eleventh year of teaching. She was offered a twelve month administrative position in a four-year university. B. J. quickly pointed out that she did not leave for the money. As she reviewed the expenses incurred in relocating and the number of hours she spends each day in the new position, she actually decreased her salary. She said, "Because the number of hours I am putting into this job in order to do the kind of job that I want to do is definitely more hours than I was putting in teaching . . . the overall pay per hour would be much less."

She pointed out that leaving teaching was a very difficult decision to make; however, she said she knew that she had to leave "for personal growth and greater opportunities." She wanted to be treated like a professional and be rewarded for her work, but she said this would never happen in teaching. She supported this by saying, "There is no incentive for doing an outstanding job unless you . . . want to do an outstanding job and you're

going to do it regardless of the compensation and the rewards." She stressed that the rewards and the incentives that she needed were not available to her in teaching; she felt compelled to take the job offer even though she hated to leave her teaching position.

#### Interpretation of B. J.'s Story

From the interview I found that B. J. was an assertive female in touch with her feelings. She radiated energy, warmth, and enthusiasm and expressed a genuine concern for others. B. J. stated throughout the interview that she was extremely dedicated and committed to teaching. These are the same characteristics outlined by Herbert Freudenberger as being prevalent among burnouts and burnout candidates. For B. J., teaching was not replenishing the energies that she was expending. She said that teaching did not hold the challenges that it once held for her, and she had reached a point of stagnation. Fortunately, B. J. exercised the option of redirecting her energies before she burned out. Ironically, she entered her new profession with the same high expectations and enthusiasm she took into the classroom. Freudenberger spoke to this when he said that people can burn out more than once because they continue to give too much to the job. They enter a new job with the same push they had for their old one.

She not only felt stagnated but she also felt that she was wasting her talents. The extracurricular activities,

policies, and paperwork were burdensome to her. Each area took her away from what she believed she had been hired to do. Her resentment came partly out of her expectations that students would have a thirst for learning and she wanted to play a major role in their growth process.

Instead, she found out that the system was inundated with bureaucratic policies. She did not understand why her professional time had to be spent typing report cards and filing reports when she should be working with students. She knew that she had a great deal to offer the students, but there was only so much energy she could give. Because she did not have any input into policy making and other major areas that affected her teaching, she felt alienated and disillusioned. As she stated, "I did not feel that I had any power or authority when it came down to actual administration. Teachers do not have any power or authority."

For a pacesetter and leader like she is, it is extremely frustrating to be a follower of rules that are considered pointless and totally irrelevant to the educational process. She stressed that teachers should play a vital role in making policies which affect teaching and the students. She believed that many of the policies were based on special interest groups in the community. "I never felt that our school board was very representative of the educational system or had a lot of expertise in the area of

education to where I felt their viewpoints were all that valid." To this she added, "I think educators should be running the school system. And I think the school boards should be made up of a representative group but I think they should be open to suggestions and experiences that teachers have had with students in the classroom."

She was dedicated and committed to making teaching a profession rather than just a job. When the realities of teaching were not convergent with her expectations, she became frustrated and disenchanted. Being a person who set high standards for herself, she also set high standards for the profession she chose. When other teachers did not work as hard as she worked, feelings of frustration and resentment began to creep into her views on teaching. Not seeing a road which provided a way for change and not being able to settle for complacency, she was forced to look elsewhere for professional satisfaction. B. J. had reached a stage in her career where she had to change her views on the teaching profession or redirect her energies in a new career field. Refusing to become cynical and complacent, she resigned.

From talking with her, I sensed that her priorities had changed from the ones she had when she began teaching. Rather than giving all the time, she now wanted something for herself out of teaching. Being a goal-oriented person, she wanted to reach goals and be recognized for her work.

She prided herself in working hard and doing an outstanding job. She resented other teachers who made higher salaries and who worked fewer hours and were less devoted than she was.

Having given to teaching for eleven years, she now wanted something in return. Knowing what the classroom had provided in the past, she knew that she would have to look elsewhere for the rewards, incentives, and growth she was seeking. B. J. chose to leave teaching before it became necessary for her to compromise her values and beliefs. She did not want to become complacent and stagnated. If she stayed in the classroom, she felt that this would occur. She said repeatedly that she wanted to grow and establish and achieve her goals. Achievement through attaining goals was one of the major ways she derived meaning from life. She did not want to become like any of the teachers with whom she worked who were serving time until retirement.

Leaving teaching was a very difficult decision to make because it was her life. She admitted that she hated to give it up because some of the most satisfying experiences in her life resulted from her teaching. These experiences, which provided her personal life with meaning, grew from having built an excellent vocational education program which was on a solid foundation in the school and business community. She further added that after students left her program, she continued to help them practice for interviews,



secure jobs, and plan for their futures. She derived the greatest meaning from the role she played in getting a young person off to a secure start after graduation. She admitted that "the greatest satisfactions came after they left my program." Ironically, her present position is actually working with people who have graduated from college.

Helping former students get off to a solid start in life was certainly going "beyond the call of duty." For B. J., the school did not have set hours or a schedule. Teaching was a twenty-four a day job and she was available day and night for her students. While reflecting on her career, she stressed that she missed the contact and involvement with the students more than any other phase of teaching. This was what she hated to give up most because as she pointed out "My greatest satisfactions come from helping others grow and achieve."

As a result of this devotion to her students and the giving of her time, she felt resentful of other teachers who were merely working a job. B. J. was not just earning a paycheck, she was giving of herself to make a contribution and a difference in the lives of the students she touched. She admitted that she enjoyed helping students set and reach goals for themselves in and out of school.

As she said many times, she went "beyond the call of duty." The profession actually demanded far less of her than she gave and than she demanded of herself. By my

standards, she would be considered a workaholic and a perfectionist. I doubt that she will ever be truly satisfied with a job working in the midst of other people who do not share her ambitions and high standards. For her, setting and attaining goals are ways she measures success. Achievement is a vital component in her life. To reach her goals, she is willing to go beyond the requirements of the position and give to her vocation with as much energy and enthusiasm as she can possibly afford. After talking with her, I suspect a profession that can replenish the energies she expends and that can give to her as she gives to it may not exist.

#### Introduction to Michelle

Michelle, a female in her late thirties, resigned from teaching after fourteen years. She was selected as the second interviewee because of recommendations by teachers and administrators in the last school system where she was employed. She was considered to be an outstanding teacher by her coworkers and supervisors as well as her students. Her students were more than students to her. Filling a void in their lives of not having children, she and her husband entertained students in their home and accompanied them on numerous trips and special outings.

She was born in a small town to a family who had to work hard to make ends meet. Michelle pointed out that there were two classes of people in her home town, the

"haves" and the "have-nots." "Since my father drove a fuel oil truck and my mother was unemployed, our family definitely was in the 'have-not' category." By her own admission, she was a good student and prided herself in making excellent grades: "By the third grade, I was holding after school classes for neighborhood pre-schoolers to teach them ABC's, songs, and nursery rhymes." It was at this point that her family decided she should teach school.

The decision for Michelle to be a teacher was all the family was able to contribute to making this dream a reality. Michelle worked in various jobs to support herself and pay for the college education she received.

After graduating from college she received her first teaching position which was in an all black school where she "taught for half a year and almost went crazy." Paradoxically, the following fall she was assigned to an all-white school that she described as being representative of Klan country. After teaching in this situation for one year, she moved to another part of the state and taught in two other school districts before resigning. Teaching in four school districts across the state provided her with experience on all academic levels with all types of students. She taught students who ranged from rich to poor and from academically gifted to remedial.

Michelle loved teaching. She was well known throughout the school system where she taught and was considered to be

a master teacher. Yet after fourteen years of working to attain a quality program and two degrees, she was ready to leave. I wanted to know why.

### Michelle's Story

Throughout the interview, which lasted for over two hours, Michelle's mannerisms, tone of voice, and nonverbal gestures were indicators of her seriousness about teaching. She used metaphoric terms to describe teaching. This was evidenced when she spoke of effectiveness in teaching as occurring when "a teacher brings about change in a child and the child's view of the world." Continuing, she said that few teachers "because of their training and their background" are effective by her standards. "The key is to look inside that child and find out, although we are the same, what makes you unique. To be an effective teacher, I think mainly, you have to understand that you are a human being dealing with human beings and we are all in this together. We are thrown in this together." She continued, "Once you put yourself so far above the child and make yourself a model to be imitated, that is not learning. That is storing information. I think the effective teacher is the one that says knowledge is not information. It is having a child see to the point he can be creative with the information you have given him and giving him the freedom to see what he can do with it. What new stuff can I make with the information that I have? Where can I go from here with it?"

Immediately after this response I asked if she thought she was the effective teacher she had described. "Yes, I do! I think that's why I was tired at the end of the day. I think the more effective you are during the day, the more exhausted you are at the end of the day." To this she adamantly added, "If you just shove purple sheets at kids during the day it does not take very much energy. It doesn't take any energy to shove the purple sheets out." She paused, "But if you get engaged in dialogue with children and you truly are trying to hear what thirty kids are trying to say, it takes a lot of energy."

Throughout the interview, she repeatedly referred to the amount of energy required for classroom life. "I was always exhausted. Constantly I was exhausted when I went in in the morning. I was more exhausted at the end of each class. By 4:00, I felt like a zombie." To Michelle, teaching "is the most exhausting work if you really try to be all the things that you're expected to be."

At this point, I asked what the term burnout meant to her "That's when you are just so exhausted--just so exhausted. You just feel when school starts in the fall, you don't know how you are going to make it."

She thought for a moment and added that she was at this point in her life. Furthermore, she admitted, without the first sign of humor, "I was seriously thinking about going to Krispy Kreme and selling doughnuts." She continued, "I

just had to have some way to get myself renurtured, refueled."

Michelle summarized her reason for leaving the classroom by saying, "I needed a change. I just had to have it. It is almost like this is a year I have been able to rebuild and nurture myself and do some of the reading I wanted to do." She paused and said, "I always knew that I would not be a career teacher and be around at 65 to get my gold watch. See, I think that people who can hang in there that long generally are people who, to begin with, see it as a job."

To this she added, "Maybe, that is a cynical point of view. Because I believe if you really see it as a profession and put everything you have into it, after 12 or 14 years you have given it out. There is nothing coming in to replace the energy you are giving out. So, if you go through and don't give very much out, there is nothing to burn out. If you start in there with nothing to begin with, there is nothing to burn out. So, the teachers who burn out most quickly are those who have given so much away and gotten no replenishment."

Unfortunately, she was not interested in returning to the classroom unless tremendous changes are made in the present education system. She outlined the changed conditions that would result in her returning to the profession. "The sad thing is I love teaching. I love it.

I love those times when I can interact with kids. At this point, I want to be back to work with kids again, but this time I want to be able to call the shots. I want to be in a situation in which I could say, 'I have this great idea. I'm going to go in and work it out with some kids.' To have time to work with my students independently, individually. To have time to myself to research, to write, to read, to think and not feel the constant pressure like the hounds of heaven constantly at your heels."

The time for personal growth was very important to her, not only for her students, but also for herself. She was constantly looking for renewing experiences and pointed out: "I have always had such high standards for myself. Not because of any encouragement I got from the system. Only because I had to deal with myself every night and every morning."

The fact that she did not get any encouragement from the system was frustrating to her. She recalled "When I wanted to go to a library to find a book that I would like to share with my kids or an article, I had to go to the principal's office, wait outside or give him a ten-minute explanation on why it was really important for me to leave school early. I was told once by a principal: 'I will let you do it this time, but this time only. This could start a real precedent.'"

She became outraged while recalling this incident and

added facetiously, "Of course, you didn't want to start a precedent. You didn't want teachers going to the libraries in the afternoon when you could be sitting around the teachers' lounge 'bitching' about the kids." She was appalled that she had to ask permission to go to the library to research material for classroom usage, but not to go to the lounge to complain about the students and the principal. She ended by saying, "That was ridiculous."

Michelle felt stifled, because, "there was never enough time to grow intellectually the way I wanted to because I was too busy trying to survive. You know, in that sense maybe I felt stagnated." She resented this. "There was no time for me to grow intellectually. There was not a time for me to explore things in greater depth or to grow in different areas. I felt like I had to steal that time."

I asked her if her school system provided staff development activities for the teachers. She laughed and said, "I'm embarrassed to tell you. I had little things on how to use the textbook effectively." At this point she said, "I really can't remember the titles because they were so insignificant. All I remember was they occurred on days when I kept saying to myself, 'I need to be back learning. I need to be back getting some things ready for tomorrow. I'm going to face thirty kids for fifty minutes tomorrow and I want to be ready to do that.' And I had to sit listening to a book salesman trying to sell a book to teachers."



She summarized that staff development did not help her grow personally or professionally. "None of my staff development, I will have to honestly say, was truly worthwhile."

Michelle said, "I almost always felt disenchanting. I have become cynical about the school system as an institution and a bureaucracy. I really feel like the majority of administrators don't even know that there are kids out there. Children really don't exist. What exists are figures on pieces of paper. And they are just numbers."

She believed that the administrators in her school system wrote pretty reports with a flowery language that were rarely accurate. To exemplify this she said, "When you read the first sentence in our philosophy of the high school--we will deal with mind, body, and spirit. And that is an absolute crock. An absolute joke."

She continued, "Mind! Mind! They might deal with one part--twenty percent of our children's minds. Body! We do send them to P. E. And what is spirit? Get up and ask a principal or administrator . . . and see what kind of response you get."

She truly resented the administration making policies that she had to implement: "Even though I was considered a master teacher, no one ever asked me what I thought should go on in the classrooms, what kind of curriculum guide should be written, or what criteria should be set up,

particularly when it came to policy affecting children and teachers." She felt insignificant because, "I was never asked my opinion."

This discussion led to the extra duties that she was assigned. She resented the fact that she was never given a choice of duties. She was assigned duties without regard to her significance as a human being. "It is very hard to feel important when you are standing in a parking lot directing traffic in the rain and that was one of my duties . . . . It is hard to feel important in that situation."

Another reference pervading her comments that made her feel insignificant in teaching was a statement made to her by an administrator after 12 years of teaching experience. This person said to her, "You can be replaced in an instant." At this point in her career, she had already received various awards for her teaching excellence.

She pointed out that this one thought followed her throughout her career. She stated, "It doesn't matter how many nights you open your home to children, how many hours you spend responding to them outside the classroom, listening to them, trying to find out where they are." She continued, "These things are not evaluated on your sheet that goes to the State Department, that goes into your personnel file. So, you can't help but feel insignificant and not like a person but like a cog in the wheel."

Michelle reviewed the duties she was assigned to sponsor. These duties included the drama club which often practiced until midnight, a service club, the debate team which required travel on weekends and practice after the regular school hours. In addition, she sold concessions at basketball games, helped select the members of the dance team, worked with the cheerleaders, sold candy, served on school-based and district committees, and attended athletic events. She said, "You were expected to attend and you were a good teacher if you showed up for those activities."

She resented "the drain of having to do the other million things that were demanded of me that had nothing to do with teaching. It was almost to the point that if you got your body to those activities, you really couldn't enjoy them because you were too exhausted!" Once again, she spoke of exhaustion and the drain that teaching had on her energy level.

When I asked if she believed that the school system took advantage of her, the response was overwhelming. "Of course they took advantage of me!" Because I was willing to spend extra hours. I did it without a pat on the back, without any extra pay, without any sort of built-in rewards. So that's taking advantage of."

Michelle believed that the other teachers whom she criticized "were really smarter than I was because they used to say, 'Look, I'm not going to change anything anyway. I'm

going to go in just like I go in to a factory and I will spend so many hours and minutes in the classroom and I will get through.' Those people were not taken advantage of, but teachers who really cared are taken advantage of."

She resented the lack of rewards and acknowledgements for a job well done. Michelle pointed out that after teaching seven and a half hours, her principals expected her to collect tickets at ballgames without regard to her personal feelings. "Not, we certainly do appreciate your being here; we know that you are tired and you would probably like to rest tonight too. Or, I know you have papers to grade, too, and that's taking advantage of. The teacher has no recourse at this point."

Michelle stressed that teachers were not only responsible for extra duties, but they were also expected to play, "nurse, psychologist, instructor, coach. You name it. I think that the teacher is expected to be all things to all people." She added, "A teacher should play (pause) the role of the human being." She believed that a teacher should be "a facilitator and someone who is a guide to lead students to explore different understandings or different viewpoints."

Michelle resented all the insignificant duties that she was assigned. "I think the thing I liked least was the millions of insignificant duties that you had and the insignificant things you are asked to do. All the things

you had to do that had nothing--no connection to the actual learning in the classroom."

On the other hand, the most meaningful times for her personally and professionally occurred with her students. She conveyed this to me when she said, "After class I could sit down with a child on a one to one and really talk about the world and life and how he saw it and how I saw it and together reach some new understandings." She continued to speak with excitement about being part of the students' growth process, especially for students at ages 14 or 15. "It is at these ages that they are exploring so many different areas."

It was the excitement and interaction with students that she missed most in teaching. "I really miss being able to design and setup learning experiences . . . . I miss seeing the light that goes on behind their eyes. That light behind their eyes. I do have a longing for that."

She was not willing to endure "all the other junk I would have to cut through just for those few precious moments and they are few . . . . Your time is taken up with the bureaucracy. Meeting the demands of the bureaucratic monster."

I asked her if teaching was what she had anticipated it would be. Her response to this question was an immediate and emphatic "No!" "We were taught that out there, there were all these little children lusting for learning. They

really wanted to diagram sentences. They really wanted to know when Columbus discovered America. They really wanted to know these things. They really wanted to know when Shakespeare was born and when he died. They really cared which of King Lear's daughters loved him." She paused and looked straight at me and said, "But see, they weren't lusting for learning, because they wanted learning when they first came to school, but by the time I got them in secondary school, for most children, that desire to really learn had been stamped out. It was a matter of surviving."

Unfortunately, not unlike the students that she taught, teaching became a matter of surviving for Michelle. It was after 14 years of an outstanding career that she decided to call it quits because she believed that she could no longer survive.

#### Interpretation of Michelle's Story

To use her terms, Michelle felt frustrated, disenchanted, stagnated, cynical, and exhausted with the present educational system. I sensed that she originally entered teaching because she wanted to play a part in the transformation of children. After teaching for 14 years she found that she did not have the energy to fight the reality of the actual teaching world to make her ideals come to life.

I believe that Michelle loved teaching but she admitted that she left teaching because she could not endure it any

longer. She wanted "to call the shots" and be able to do creative things with students to promote and enhance learning. When she was not able to do this, I am convinced that she became afraid she would end up working a job like someone going to an automobile factory. This was not the purpose of her entering the teaching profession. Michelle wanted to make a difference in the students' lives; to use her terms, she wanted to see the light behind their eyes.

Michelle said that the most meaningful experiences in her life involved transformations of herself and other lives that she touched. Personal growth including the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual realms was foremost in her life. She pointed out that she was on a search for meaning and as a result, she constantly immersed herself in readings and dialogues with other people.

Relating the conversation with Michelle to Frankl's theories on meaning, I believe that she found meaning through her deeds, creativity, and encounters with other human beings. When she was required to expend her energies on activities unrelated to teaching and not allowed to concentrate entirely on working with her students, her job ceased to provide the meaning she was seeking. I believe that she was the type of teacher who saw beauty in learning, but became extremely disenchanted with teaching when she was not allowed to grow personally or professionally.

Actually one of the main criticisms that she held for the schools was the lack of encouragement by administrators for her personal growth. Michelle did not consider the staff development activities provided by the school system as renewing or enriching experiences. On the contrary, she laughed when she spoke of them. Not receiving growth experiences from inservice activities, she planned her own. These included going to the public library to collect materials which could be used in the classroom and enlighten her as a teacher. However, when the administrators refused to allow her to go to the library to do research on school time, she became confused and frustrated. I sensed that this is one of the events that led her to question her treatment as a professional.

I found that she was very resentful because she was not treated like the professional that she was. She worked very hard to earn advanced degrees and build an outstanding program, only to be required to fill out forms and perform other menial tasks. As she said, "Do I have a Master's degree so I can fill out this form? Did it take a Master's degree for me to stand in this line to get kids on a bus or clean off these tables?"

Michelle pointed out that she tried to complete all the forms and tasks expediently and accurately. This was her way of earning points that could be cashed in when she wanted special favors from the administration for her class.



I believe she played the game of the bureaucracy, not because she believed in it, but because she could earn points which could be exchanged for the things she wanted to do.

Another major area which I found to be a drain on her energies was the extracurricular duties she was assigned. Without any regard to her needs, she was required to work at ballgames, sponsor clubs, produce school plays, sell candy, and perform many other functions in addition to teaching. I believe she resented having the responsibility for these duties because the administration expected her to do them without giving any consideration to the demands and volume of work generated by her classes. Michelle said she needed the evening hours for renewal for herself and time to make classroom preparations. Instead, she was expected to assume and implement many duties which had relatively little if anything to do with her teaching. She resented being taken for granted and not being appreciated for her excellent teaching. From her comments, teaching seemed to have a low priority in relation to other school functions.

Being an effective teacher was important to her. As she said, "I was effective because I really tried to give from my inside at whatever cost. The cost was exhaustion." She continued to convey her purpose for teaching when she said, "I would like to think that I have touched kids in very unique ways that not just everybody can do." I sensed

that this was the key for her teaching and separated her from other teachers.

I believe that she valued the worth of her students and she treated them like human beings with hearts that beat. Michelle wanted other teachers to share her feelings and concerns for students. I found that she was genuine and sincere when she spoke of the influence she could have on her students. Also, the feedback from parents was important to her when they would tell her, "You have changed my child's life."

Michelle prided herself in being a master teacher and was devastated when an administrator told her "Don't think this program revolves around you. You can be replaced in an instant." She never forgot this comment, for it pervaded the remainder of her teaching career. She was deeply hurt by this and I believe that this evaluation of her work was demeaning to her both personally and professionally because she had spent years in providing quality educational experiences for students and in being a master teacher. "The interactions I had with kids amounted to nothing! Certainly they could have replaced my body. They could put any body in there to have kids turn pages in textbooks." She took great pride in the fact that two teachers were hired to replace her. The system could not find anyone with her expertise and willingness to carry the load she carried.

As a result of the demands of the school system, she

pointed out that she experienced burnout and felt totally exhausted. Needing renewing, transforming experiences in her own life and not finding them in the school system, she felt compelled to resign. When she was offered a job outside the classroom, she accepted it. Michelle stated that the energies required to be an excellent teacher could only be sustained from 10 to 14 years and she knew that she would never be around to collect her gold watch.

After listening to her views on education, her philosophy of teaching, and her concern for students, I had a sense of sadness because she was no longer a teacher. I believe that she was an extremely good teacher who made a lasting impression on her students as she touched their lives. I know that her interview left an impression on me.

#### Introduction to Jack

The third interview was with Jack, a low-keyed, reserved, pleasant man in his late thirties. Jack is married, but does not have any children. He grew up in a small, rural town where he attended school. He said he was not an exemplary student by most standards. In fact, he considered high school a waste of time and chose to spend his time reading his own selections and working on his own electrical and mechanical projects and creations. After 12 years of public schools, he entered a small, private college but later transferred to a larger university.

He dropped out of college and enlisted in the military

services during the Vietnam era. After serving four years in various United States bases at home and abroad, he returned to North Carolina and once again enrolled in college. He discovered that service life provided many experiences that fellow classmates could not comprehend. Being older and more mature, he found other students to be very young and out of touch with world reality. As a result, he concentrated on his studies and graduated in three years while maintaining a high academic average.

Not knowing what profession he would enter when he graduated from college, he admitted that he "fell into" a teaching position. He taught in two school systems during his teaching career. The first position was in a small school system and the second was in a large, middle-income school in North Carolina. This job lasted 11 years. During his last year of teaching, Jack, who was not actively seeking other employment, was offered a position in a firm which provided him with a chance for growth and advancement. This opportunity was one that he said he could not refuse and, consequently, he resigned from teaching.

#### Jack's Story

The interview with Jack lasted almost three hours. He began by talking about his students and how he tried to individualize instruction as much as possible. This was extremely important to him. He believed that the students could learn more if he helped them on an individual basis.

As a result, he worked with every student every period of every day to accommodate students at different learning levels.

Not only did this type of instruction work to the students' advantage but also to his. "I didn't like relating to students as a group as well as I did individually because I believe that learning takes place on an individual basis."

He said, "I enjoy helping people, whether it's students or the neighbors, or whomever. I enjoy helping people and showing them how to do things. I'm just natured that way." To this he added, "I just don't like to try to help someone who doesn't want to be helped. That is frustrating. Trying to help someone who doesn't want to be helped is like trying to help an alcoholic who doesn't want to be helped."

"When the alcoholic decides he wants to be helped, then you can help him. You're beating your head against the wall until he gets ready. Until a student gets ready to learn you're beating your head against the wall." After a pause he added, "That's how I felt."

Jack's position is that the students who did not want to learn and who made a game out of the classroom did not need to be in there. "There is no reason for them to be in the classroom. I don't want to run a babysitting service."

He resented the fact that he had to "put up with" troublesome students. He expressed that he became

frustrated because he did not have the power to put the disruptive students out of his class. He blamed this lack of power on the system and said, "It wasn't the kids in particular, it was just the whole thing. I got along with students great as far as one on one but when I had a class that had one or two who caused me problems they ruined it. They didn't ruin it just for the day, but for the whole year." At this point he showed his disgust and said, "Two kids can ruin it for me and I had to put up with them."

I asked what he would do to resolve this dilemma if he had the power. He responded, "If a student gave me problems, I should be able to say, 'Hey! Take a week off!' If he comes back and doesn't want to learn, you should not have to keep him in there."

Unfortunately, Jack could not do this. He believed that if a teacher had the power to control the classroom, discipline problems would be minimized. Jack said that the present system placed the teacher in a "no win" situation, because "I could not send them to the office and have credibility with the administration. I could not keep them in your classroom and have credibility with the other students."

I asked what he expected teaching to be. "I didn't have any idea. I did not have the opportunity to teach until after I had finished college."

He thought about the question for a moment and

responded, "I expected to have a room full of students. I expected to teach them."

He continued to say, "I did not expect to have the problems with getting students out of my classes that I had. I expected to be able to go to the principal and say 'I don't want to teach this kid. He doesn't want to learn. He doesn't need to be in here. He's wasting my time. He's wasting everyone else's time.' But this was not the case. It's not the principal's fault, he's got to put him somewhere. He can't put the student on the street because he doesn't get along with the teacher."

This issue dominated a major portion of the interview. He pointed out that "I think teaching would be a lot of fun if I had had a class full of students that really wanted to learn. I think I would really enjoy it, because I could teach them and I would not have had to work so hard. But to teach kids who do not want to learn (pause) and I had to motivate them on top of trying to teach them (pause again) I had to make them want to learn too--because they don't want to learn. That's a pain!"

Jack made several references to the strains he felt as a teacher. "Teaching wears you down mentally. I rarely came home tired physically, but I was mentally drained after a day." He continued, "Some teachers are just a ball of fire all the time. I don't know what they do when they go home. I guess they just fall into bed."

He categorized teachers into three areas. "Some teachers go like they are fighting fire all day. Some teachers are low key and save their energies. Some are in between."

I asked him to categorize himself. "I felt I was an excellent teacher at times, but I couldn't sustain that all the time. You can't sustain being a excellent teacher 24 hours a day unless you just live it and don't do anything else . . . don't have a personal or private life." He added, "You cannot be an excellent teacher all the time and have a personal life. You can be an outstanding teacher part of the time and you can be an average teacher part of the time, but if you are an excellent teacher all of the time you have to do it 24 hours a day. You don't have time for anything else."

To this he said, "I would not have survived four years if I had to do it 24 hours a day."

Even though he said he tried to keep his "personal and professional lives separated," he found that teaching constantly prevaded his thoughts. He later admitted he could not completely sever the two lives because he constantly had to go to night or weekend activities sponsored by the school. Some of these events included ballgames, graduation exercises, proms, band and choral concerts, dances, conferences, and committee meetings.

For Jack, teaching was a very exhausting profession.



He spoke of being tired and burned out several times during the interview. He said, "I would say I was burned out--probably two or three times." He paused and continued with a little humor "I was probably burned out at least ten times--once every spring."

Our conversation flowed into his feelings about teaching after 11 years in the classroom. "I was tired of teaching. I was tired of putting up with it. It was a hassle. I spent a lot of time getting ready and one student would blow it up for me . . . . By 12:00 I was worn out and when I went home at 3:30 I was beat. Then there was always something else for me to do. It's not only teaching. I had many other things to do also."

At this point, I asked what other duties he was responsible for completing. "I sponsored a club and attended ballgames, PTA's, conferences, etc. That's just the way it is. They don't expect you just to teach. I had paperwork to do and papers to grade. There are a thousand things to do and it is not just the teaching. It wore me out. I could not sustain it."

He continued referring to his duties, "I had to do paperwork, secretarial work, federal forms, state forms on how many students you had of each color, each age group, what they were going to do when they graduated, what they were doing after they graduated. They wanted to know all types of things that in most cases they could have gotten

from a computer if they would take time to program the darn thing." He paused and continued, "They could program a bunch of the 'nit picking' paperwork they have in the school system."

The completion of forms really seemed to irritate him. "All the information I provided one time was required again two months later on a different form. They already had the information and if they had entered the data on a computer the first time it would have been there. But they will not do that. It is easier to ask a teacher to do it again."

Jack seemed to be at odds with the system in general rather than anyone in particular. This was evidenced when he said, "The school works as well as it does in spite of the system. The system works more to hinder a teacher than it does to help them in a lot of cases because of the paperwork it generates."

I asked him to elaborate on this issue and his response was, "There is too much paperwork not related to teaching. If all I had to do was teach that would have been great. If I had had someone to grade all my papers, make out all my tests--I had to type them if I wanted them typed or I had to write them out in longhand which took a long time. One thing that has saved time is copiers. We were using a duplicating machine until about two years ago in a big school system like ours. It is amazing what a copier will do. I never saw one until two years ago. But that uses a

lot of paper and they are having a problem with the paper now."

I asked Jack if he would consider returning to the classroom. Emphatically, "No!" (pause) "I would if I had to, to keep from starving."

Jack stated that the summers were very important to him because he used them to rebuild the energies he expended in teaching. In fact he said, "Summer was the reward for teaching." Summer was not the only reward he received. He stated that his most important rewards came from actually helping students learn. "When I explained something to a student and heard him say, 'Yeah, I understand.' When I had been trying to explain it to him for a while and all at once he catches on, that is immediate gratification. He figures out what I was talking about all this time, but he was going about it in the wrong way."

When I asked what were the most meaningful times he experienced in teaching, the answer was, "Students who came back who had gone on to college and had gone into the field. I helped a few get jobs here and there. That was meaningful that they got a job and they came back to tell me. I could tell that they liked and enjoyed what I had taught them. I had students who really didn't learn much but they came back. They respected me when they came back and talked to me even though they didn't want to learn anything when they were in my classroom, but still if they had been there two

or three years later or had they come in whenever they were a little more mature, it would have been more meaningful for them and me. I enjoy talking to the ones I have had in the past to see how they are doing and if they are using anything that I taught them. It may not be something to do with the class as such, but it may be something they picked up." The fact that he was able to help someone learn the subject area he taught or something about life was very important to him.

I inquired whether he missed anything about teaching. The response was, "I miss the people. I miss the kids. I miss talking to the kids individually. I miss talking to friends, teachers, associates. I miss being around the school." He continued to say that he enjoyed being around the students, but added, "I don't miss the classroom. Not one bit!"

I asked what he would change about teaching. He directed the response immediately to the issue of professionalism. "I would treat teachers like professionals and let them come and go as they pleased. Let them go off campus to eat. Quit having them police the parking lot and the bathroom and let them go to the bathroom. Have some people around to take over the class when they want to take a break."

Jack pointed out that he did not believe that a school system needs a teacher in every classroom. He said that all

the teacher needs to do is to "Get them started and let a parent come in. Doctors have nurses."

This lack of professional treatment concerned him. "I was treated like a student in a lot of cases. I'm not saying that it happened all the time, but I felt that principals and administrators had been teachers, and in a lot of cases they treated teachers as students." He added, "I think other teachers felt the same way."

One aspect of teaching that he resented was the lack of a reward system for good teaching. "I think teachers need rewards. I think they need to be able to move and be promoted. There's no promotion. I stayed there 11 years and never got a promotion. The only thing I ever got was a small pay raise."

He continued to say, "There is no way to reward anyone for doing a good job in teaching. They do not treat teachers as professionals. They require you to be there at a certain time and to leave at a certain time. It is almost like punching a clock."

He really resented the lack of professional treatment for teachers. "I could not go anywhere for lunch. I was stuck there all day. Teachers are not treated as professionals. It is not really their (administrators) fault . . . . They do not know any different because they came up through the ranks."

Jack summarized his views on the present school system

by saying that "It is not as effective as administrators or the bureaucracy would like to believe. I don't think it is due to the curriculum. It is just the way the system is operated." He pointed out that the system has not kept up with society and has changed little during the last 100 years.

He added, "Teachers are bored, kids are bored, schools do not provide any kind of personal growth for teachers--or very limited amounts."

He believed that schools are boring for several reasons. "I read that we live in the only country that teaches their native language for twelve years . . . so they bore everybody to death. One of my pet peeves is that they don't let people work at their own rate. Somewhere along the line they decided that everybody who is 18 needs to be in the 12th grade and all the 16 and 17 year olds should be in the 11th grade." He continued to say that we should do away with the graded system and let students work at their own rate. "They have to be there 180 days. What is so magic about 180 days?"

He suggested that reforms for schools were necessary. Emphasis should be placed on students learning individually and "do away with the grading system." He added that "compulsory school education is a waste of time for some students." Also he recommended that schools should involve parents as volunteers to assist teachers in activities that

do not require professional expertise. One way to do this would be to let them walk around to patrol the campus, hallways, parking lots, etc. "There is no reason to have a teacher standing out there."

When I asked him to summarize the reasons he left teaching in the classroom, he mentioned "I just did not want to teach anymore. I had taught 11 years and did not see anywhere I could go except into administration." With this comment he continued to say, "I did not feel I had an opportunity to advance and I didn't want to be there 20 years from now. I did not want to retire as a teacher." He thought about this for a moment and added, "I know that it is an honorable profession, but I don't think a person should go through life and be one thing all his life."

This was very important to him. "I don't want to go through my life . . . and keep looking toward retirement. I'm not going through life to get out."

Jack referred to other teachers who left teaching. "I think they are leaving for the same reasons I did. They have worked at it and realized that they cannot be an excellent teacher and do anything else or have any other type of life." He added, "I think they are tired of the hassle and burned out every day when they go home. They are burned out at the end of the year. When they leave, they don't want to come back in the fall. "

He directed the response to his own situation and said,

"If it was only teaching I could handle it, but there are too many other things involved to do it for a long period of time."

To this he added, "I believe that five or ten years is about all anybody will be able to do it. How many administrators do you see that stayed in teaching? Why are your administrators not teachers if it is so great? They got out."

This lack of opportunity in teaching concerned him. "There is nowhere to go in teaching. You either go into administration or stay in the classroom."

He said that he did not want to be in the classroom for 20 years because "you don't grow. That is important to me--to not get bored. I don't want to get bored with what I am doing. I think you grow upon your experiences."

Reflecting on teaching, he said that he used a lot of what he learned in the classroom in his present job. "I can relate to people that I probably could not have related to had I not taught a cross section of the population . . . everyone from the bottom to the top."

Jack pointed out the importance of leaving school issues at school. He "kept personal and professional lives separated." This concern reoccurred several times in the interview. He stated that the only way he could survive was "by getting away from it." Once again he added, "I don't see staying in a job 20 years. I don't care what job it may



be. Unless there is growth in it, I would not do it again."

I asked if he regretted the years he gave to teaching. The response was, "I don't regret teaching. It was a good experience. I could have quit the first week probably, but I decided I'm not going to let this beat me. For him teaching was a "no win" situation. He ended his interview by saying, "I gave it 11 years and I decided that it would never beat me, but I never could beat it either."

#### Interpretation of Jack's Story

Based upon the interview with Jack, I sensed that he was committed and dedicated to developing his creative abilities and using them in helping others. Several times during the conversation he made reference to the importance of helping others and how much he enjoyed learning. He stated that he selected his major in college because he knew that he could learn a lot from the courses and be able to apply his knowledge to real life situations.

Even though he did not enter college with teaching as a goal, I felt that he chose teaching as a career because he could use his major in helping others make practical applications. After listening to him speak of learning and helping others, I believe he began to dislike teaching when he found that many of the students did not share his love of learning and made a mockery of the subject matter. As a result, trying to teach these students was like beating his head against the wall. He quickly realized that he had to

individualize instruction as much as possible to be able to reach the students who wanted to learn. Otherwise, he believed that he would be shortchanging them. Because of this individualization, he found teaching to be "mentally exhausting."

I believe that he resented not having the power to refuse to teach the students who did not want to learn and were disruptive influences to the class. Realizing the importance of learning, he indicated that he despised having to take quality time to deal with the disruptive students. When he sent these students to the office and recommended suspension from school or removal from his class, he discovered that his professional judgment was ignored and the students were returned to his classroom to be disruptive again. My sense is that this was a major area of contention for him and one of the main reasons he became dissatisfied with teaching. He said, "If you have a problem with a kid, you should be able to say 'Out the door,' and that is it. No paperwork. Nothing. He just does not belong in your class if he gives you trouble." This was not the case in his particular situation.

My feelings are that Jack resented the lack of administrative support and professional treatment that he believed teachers should receive. He told me that teachers were treated like students. According to him, teachers should not be confined to the classroom all day, they should

not have to abide by the same rules that students must obey, and they should be respected for the professionals they are. In other words, he said that teachers should be treated like professional adults and rewarded for a job well done. I also believe that he felt that teaching was a thankless task. Because of the lack of a reward system and the lack of positive feedback, he stated that he believed teachers will continue to leave teaching.

Jack indicated that he did not believe that teachers should be responsible for extracurricular duties and clerical tasks. I sensed that he resented the extra responsibilities, the paperwork, and the routine tasks he had to perform. They were boring to him. Jack seemed to be a man who enjoyed creative challenges and who had little regard for rote learning and methodical work. I believe that when he discovered that teaching was repetitious and required a routine, he became dissatisfied and bored.

To him being self-sufficient and helping others were two of the most rewarding experiences in life. I believe that he became dissatisfied with teaching because he was not allowed to help others as he wanted to help them, and he did not have the time to be creative. I felt that he was a free spirit who liked to do things at his own pace, and teaching with its structured scheduling did not fit his personality.

As stated in Chapter II, Frankl indicated that meaning

can be detected through what we create or give to life, what we experience from living, and the stance we take. I am convinced that Jack found meaning for his life through his creative works and from his interactions with people, but teaching did not allow him to be creative and to interact with his students in a meaningful manner. Because of mandated policies, predetermined curriculum content, little administrative support, and a disregard of his professional judgment concerning classroom disruptions, he was not able to fulfill a meaning for his life from teaching.

Frankl also stated that a person detects meaning in life and has the will to choose "what he will do and what he will be" (1968, p. 51). I do not believe that Jack felt he had these choices in teaching. I sensed that he was relieved when he resigned because at last he was able to find meaning in taking a stance against a system in which he did not believe. He supported my thoughts by saying that the entire system needed to be revamped. He stressed that until dramatic changes were made in the existing educational system, excellent teachers would continue to resign.

After years of working at the same school in the same classroom, teaching the same grade levels and the same subject areas, he said he did not want to teach any longer. I sensed that he became bored with teaching because he was not growing. He was exhausted from repeating the same things over and over again to students who did not want to

learn. I think teaching became a matter of survival for Jack. This was evident when he said that teaching was a "no win" situation and he found that he actually dreaded getting up in the mornings because he hated going to school. He was convinced that there was no way he could sustain teaching until retirement.

As a result of his discontentment and boredom, he believed that to grow he had to go. Being a highly creative and adventurous person, he said that school was boring to him and to the students. He knew that he was burned out after 11 years and he was sure that his students were burned out after 12. He said, "I had to get away from it to survive."

#### Introduction to Steve

Steve, the fourth interviewee, was selected for this research because of recommendations from co-teachers and my personal knowledge of his educational record as a student and a teacher. When I talked with him about the topic of my research, he gladly volunteered to tell his story. He resigned after teaching eight years in grades 7-12. During his teaching career, he taught three subject areas and coached after school hours the entire time he was employed as a teacher.

Steve was born to parents whom he characterized as hardworking, rural people. He stressed several times that he grew up with the "work ethic" and that he was not afraid

to work. As a result of his labors, he attained many achievements, honors, and awards throughout his school years. He was active in many school organizations and a participant on several athletic teams. His excellent record in school earned him a college scholarship.

After graduating from a small, four-year college, he began working in a large school system in North Carolina. During his first years of teaching, he was offered a professional position which would have netted him a large salary and a title. Because teaching was important to him he refused the lucrative offer.

Several times during the course of the interview, he choked up when he reflected on his teaching and the students he helped through the years. He was more than a teacher for his students; he was their friend. He admitted that during the early years of his teaching career, they were like his family.

Breaking away from this "family" was a difficult decision to make. However, he did not have a choice. His story follows.

#### Steve's Story

The interview with Steve lasted for several hours. He began by telling me that he entered the teaching profession because he "had a strong interest in working with young people. Working with young people was my main goal because it was a challenge to me and it was fun."

Steve pointed out that the most important part of teaching for him was the students. "It wasn't the subject matter. It was the contact with the students, . . . being an example to them and helping someone in life." When he began teaching, he did not have children of his own; "However," he stated, "the students always have been my children, so to speak." He continued to discuss the importance of each student he taught, stressing several times during the interview that he made a special effort to speak to each student before the class ended each day. He said that he was always open and honest with his students and wanted to be a good role model for them.

Steve admitted that he took pride in getting to know all of his students on a personal basis. He also tried to make the subject matter he taught appealing to them. As a result of his concern and teaching abilities, students requested to be placed in his class. He was extremely proud of this, but quickly added that many students were taken out of other classes and placed in his because of teacher/student conflicts. He estimated that he "received 50 trouble makers from other teachers' classes." He resented this action because he was forced to pick up the slack from other teachers who could not handle discipline problems.

Resentment was also evident when he compared his classroom actions with those of other teachers. He said,

"If I'm in my classroom lecturing every day, grading papers every night, and working my 'can' off while the guy next door is showing films all day . . . or listening to the radio to the news report for history class." He paused and added disgustedly, "They get paid the same as anybody else. Now, what kind of system is that? It is not fair."

He began discussing other aspects of teaching that he believed were inequitable which included the number of hours he literally gave to the students beyond the regular school day. He pointed out that he spent approximately 80 hours a month, ten months a year coaching sports. The compensation for this time averaged to be a dollar an hour. Responding to this statement, he said, "I could go to the Seven-Eleven and work from 3:30 until 11:00 making a lot more money selling dirty magazines and beer."

This was a point of contention for him because in teaching and coaching, He "was spending quality time trying to be a quality person and give things to people that they will never forget."

After his coaching duties were completed at the end of the day, he drove many of his students home because he was concerned for their welfare and safety. As a result of this devotion, he arrived at his home around 11:30 or 12:00 at night. This pattern continued for several years.

While reflecting on his past experiences, he said, "I get a little choked up because teaching meant a lot to me.



If they had paid me \$5.00 an hour to coach, I would still be there. That would have been \$400 a month." The small salary he was making in comparison to the number of hours he was working was one reason he began to question his job.

Another reason was his son. He said, "Walking out the door at least 100 times at night, my little boy hanging around my legs saying, 'Don't go Daddy,' had probably more to do with it than anything. I would ask myself, 'Why am I going out the door?'" He continued to relay the painful scenario, "I'm going to make \$1.50 tonight and . . . put up with all kinds of hassles. I'm going to take people home across the county and they will not tell me thank you. Why am I doing this?" The long hours spent coaching were draining on him, but he said, "The thing that got to me the most, worse than anything all year . . . was the 'durn' parking lot duty. I had to be standing in the parking lot every morning at 8:00."

Obviously, this assigned responsibility was resented. "I would stand around a half hour out there--rain, sleet, snow, you name it. I would stand in the parking lot and be seen." To this he said, "Now, I didn't go to college to have bathroom duty or stand in a parking lot."

He considered such duties an insult to his intelligence and he said, "The more I stood in parking lots and bathrooms, the more I decided that my college education was worth more to me than that. I got to thinking, I'm not lazy

and there is a better way to make a living than this."

Steve pointed out that many of his classmates from high school were making two or three times his salary and working fewer and less strenuous hours than he was working. He also stated that many of the parents of his students said, "I don't see how you do it." He responded to this comment by saying, "After a while it starts sinking in and you say, 'Why am I doing this?'"

He said that he believed that teaching was a commendable profession, but other people did not share his feelings. According to Steve, people regard teaching as "a chore. It is not really a profession. It is something you are doing now, but it is not something you are going to do long. It's something you are doing until you find something better."

Such comments degraded his chosen profession and concerned him until "it got to the point that it was affecting my self esteem, my pride, and my self worth. I felt like I was second class being a teacher."

He continued to recount his feelings and stated that he became depressed about his own status in life. Having been an overachiever and a highly motivated, ambitious person, he said, "I had dreams of being somebody."

Pointing out that after eight years, he was still on the bottom of the pay scale, he realized that teaching was not the vehicle by which he could fulfill his dreams.

Instead, he stressed that he was teaching and coaching without the compensation he felt he was due. While teaching he "always had two or three jobs. Anything . . . to make money to make ends meet." During his last year of teaching, the load and extra duties became too heavy to carry. He said, "I had reached a point where I couldn't keep my eyes open. I had to take antidepressants and go to the doctor." This physical state scared him to the point that he said, "I will never get in that position again."

He continued, "Last year was the last nail in the coffin. There was no doubt in my mind that I had to get out or I would probably be in an institution right now."

At this stage of the interview, I asked what the term burnout meant to him. The reply was a surprise. "It meant, last year I missed four days in a row, laid in bed, and couldn't stand to go back. I couldn't function. I had to see a doctor. I could not go through another day."

Steve emphasized that other teachers viewed teaching like he did. "I don't know of any teacher I have ever talked to who hasn't reached a point at some time where they were tired of it, exhausted, and burned out."

He supported this statement by saying, "I walked into the teachers' lounge a million times and all I heard was eight more years, five more years, and then I can retire. All these people had on their minds was retiring."

Steve said that he hated to see teachers who were

unhappy and who felt locked into the system. At the same time he said, "I think that after 10, 12, or 14 years in a job, you get to the point where you say, 'I'm either going to get out or be in this the rest of my life.'" Referring to his own situation, he said, "I got to the point where I put eight years in it and if I don't get out now, I'm not going to be very marketable somewhere else."

Admitting that he could not see himself teaching at the age of 55, he felt the only choice he had was to terminate his position. He summarized his resignation: "I think it was time for me to grow outward. I felt like I had been in school all my life. I felt like I had just graduated when I got out of teaching." To this he added, "After seeing how the other side of the world lives, I wonder why it took me so long to do it."

Steve pointed out that one of the main reasons he left teaching was the fact he was turning into a very negative person like many of the other teachers he knew. "Teachers are the most negative people in the world. The more I stayed around teachers, the more negative I got, the more depressed I got."

His shift in attitude concerned him. Again, one of the reasons was his son. He said, "I did not want my son to see his father be a negative, beaten-by-the-system person. I wanted his father to be a winner, somebody that was doing well in the world."

He partially attributed his transition in attitude to the lack of professionalism in teaching. "I felt that a lot of teachers are treated like students by the administration. The rules they put on teachers are like the rules they put on students. It is ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous!"

He pointed out that such rules were not necessary for professionals. He stated that teachers were not treated as professionals only advanced students. To further illustrate the lack of professionalism he experienced he referred to the confinement of the classroom. He described teaching as being "just like being in prison. I resented the fact that I was locked in that room. I felt guilty having to go to the bathroom. Your whole day is run by the clock." He paused and continued to say, "I didn't get a college education to be told when I could go to the bathroom."

He cited other issues which supported his concern for the lack of professionalism he witnessed in teaching. One of the strongest concerns focused on the issue of discipline. He stated that when he sent someone to the office he expected the administrators to take action on his referral. He did not send students for minor offenses and only used the office as a last resort. This was not the case. "When I took someone to the office I felt like I was just as much on trial as the student was. I have taken people to the office and they acted like it was a real inconvenience."

He continued to recount the lack of administrative support by saying that his pride was damaged "when a student came back into the room with a discipline slip, showed everyone, and they laughed at me." He looked directly at me and said, "How does this make a teacher look?"

Because of this lack of respect for his professional judgment by the school administrators, he reached a point last year where he no longer cared. "I tried and didn't get any help."

I asked if he shared his concerns and feelings with the administration. To this question, he replied he could not discuss his problems with them because they viewed "discipline problems as a sign of weakness."

He addressed the issue of discipline and the lack of administrative support several times during the interview. This was very frustrating for him and he said, "You can't spend all your time disciplining because you are supposed to be teaching. What do you do?" He summarized his views by saying, "I think some of the most frustrating times in my life have been from the lack of help with discipline."

These frustrations were compounded by the lack of rewards in the teaching profession. He pointed out, "You never get recognized for the job you did. You only got scorned if you didn't do your job. The more you did, the more they expected you to do with no rewards."

Once again, he said that he was the type of teacher who

did every duty he was assigned without complaining. Some of these duties included paperwork. He said, "I used to have five million reports. Right after class I had to be in the gym or on the playing field and in the mornings I had to be in the parking lot. I didn't have time to do anything."

As a result of time demands, he admitted that he had to take work home over and above the 80 hours he spent coaching each month. The teaching profession and all that it entails was exhausting for him. "There were a thousand times when the bell rang and I could have thrown my head on the desk and collapsed. You felt like you could not take another breath just from the stress and anxieties of things that come up during the day."

He stated that he believed a lot of teachers reach the same stage he reached. If they continued in the profession, they end up biding their time until they can get out. He said he did not want to live his life biding his time.

As he emphasized many times throughout the interview, he was a very ambitious person. He admitted, "I wasn't growing. I just got stale. I wasn't challenged, I wasn't growing. I wasn't being fulfilled. I lost it, I guess."

I asked him to define fulfillment. He responded, "Fulfillment is when I know that I am doing the job that is expected of me. I'm getting rewarded for what I do." He continued, "If you can do what you enjoy doing, you can do a good job at it, and you can be rewarded for it, that's

fulfillment.

I asked him to define personal growth. He replied, "Personal growth is when you are continually in a situation where you can grow. Where you can do things that interest you. You don't get in the same rut. In teaching, I found I was getting in a rut." He paused and added, "Personal growth is when you can have new and exciting ideas, new and exciting career plans and opportunities." He pointed out that new things are challenging and motivating.

He turned the conversation back to direction of the administration. He said, "The first people who need to grow are the administrators. They have the same traditional style, beliefs, and directions about education that were prominent 20 years ago. There are not any new or exciting procedures going on."

Continuing with the issue of personal growth, I inquired about the staff development activities that were offered by his school district. To this he responded, "All the workshops we had were worth about \$1.95, if you were taxed. Really \$1.85 on the money. Of all the workshops I went to in eight years . . . two were worth going to."

He paused and resumed discussing the topic. "Staff development is a joke. It is a joke. No one I have talked to likes it. They resent having to go. They don't get anything out of it. It is boring."

His suggestions to improve inservice education included



conducting workshops directly related to curriculum areas being taught. He stated that teachers who were in touch with classroom reality should present the workshops and ideas that could be applied in the classroom should be the topic for some of these workshops. Unfortunately, the sessions he attended offered few useable ideas. He said, "Everything they said to do for lesson plans or ideas could be done in one class period. What do you do for 179 more days?"

Steve shifted topics at this stage of the interview to other teachers who shared his profession. "The people who are good teachers are the ones with character. The ones that care. They reach a point where they can't take it any longer." He reached this point after eight years.

He shared his feelings that he felt cheated. He gave the schools where he taught many, many hours beyond the regular teaching day. He stated that a 12-hour day would have been a blessing. He gave of himself, his time and energies without recognition or rewards. Admitting that he was bitter about this, he said, "I should have been able to make a living at what I was good at." He paused and continued, "But, the negatives that cropped up . . . took away the incentive to do good. Without incentives and personal growth, teaching is like beating your head against the wall." He added, "What motivates a teacher? How are you rewarded for a good job? You get the same as the Joe next

door knocking the door down at 3:15, doing nothing."

I asked if he believed merit pay plans could solve the inequities that he identified. He responded, "I have talked to a lot of teachers who are upset about merit pay. I don't think merit pay can be done fairly . . . . I think it would be more of a headache to a teacher than an asset."

Because he did not believe that merit pay was the answer, I inquired if he thought teaching would improve in the future. The response was a quick and emphatic, "No!" He qualified his answer by saying, "Teaching will not get much better. It will not. There is no way it can keep up with the professional market. There is no way the federal government will put the money in it that should be in it."

He summarized his teaching: "We can talk from now until forever. Education is always going to be low on the totem pole and it is the biggest crime of the century. I don't see why a classroom teacher is not worth \$35,000 to \$40,000 a year." He added, "They work three times as hard as some of the people I know who make \$100,000 a year."

I asked if he would return to teaching. He responded, "There is no way I am going back in the classroom. I told my wife that I didn't care if I had to dig ditches. I am not going through another year like I went through. I was one step from the 'looney farm.'"

He said, "I resent the fact that I spent eight years in teaching. I resent it when I can make more money in one day

than I did in three months teaching. What I am doing is important, but teaching is more important."

He confessed that he was ready to change careers. During his last year of teaching he was offered a job, but did not want to leave in the middle of a school year. This was not the case when he was offered a position in private enterprise at the end of the school year. He accepted this opportunity. Referring to his resignation from the school system, he said, "Nobody asked 'Why?' 'I understand' was the response I got. Never, 'Why?' If they understand so much, why hasn't something been done about it?"

#### Interpretation of Steve's Story

From talking with Steve, I found that he was an extremely conscientious, hardworking young man who took his teaching very seriously. He seemed to pride himself in his ability to work hard and get the job done. I believe that he also enjoyed working with young people and setting a good example for them. Teaching was the profession he chose to enable him to do these things.

From his comments, I sensed that teaching provided him with a great deal of satisfaction during the early years of his career. But as the years accumulated, he found teaching to be less fulfilling until finally it became a drain on his energies and affected his health and his family life. I believe one of the turning points for him occurred when his son was born and he was required to be away from his family

at nights and sometimes on the weekends. He said that this was difficult to handle. However, the worst part was not making enough money to make ends meet even though he was working so many extra hours each week. Steve was forced to work odd jobs in the limited spare time that he had. I found that the inability to provide an adequate income for his family hurt his pride deeply because he stressed that he should have been able to make a living at what he was good at, but this was not the case. He resented it.

In addition, I sensed that Steve resented the lack of professional treatment and the disregard of his dedication and commitment. He stated that professionals should not have to perform the clerical duties that were required of teachers to complete the large amounts of paperwork. The extra duties, especially patrol duties--parking lot, bathroom, and hall--were belittling to him. Of his extra duties, I found that the most humiliating experience was parking lot duty every morning. I am convinced that he wanted to expend his energies teaching rather than spending a vast amount of time patrolling the common areas of the school grounds.

Another humiliation that he felt was evident when he referred to disruptive students that he sent to the office. . These students were only warned and sent back to the classroom. The students, in turn, made a laughing matter out of the situation. I found that he was enraged and

humiliated with the laughter and blamed his situation on the administration for failing to listen to his recommendations. This lack of regard for his professional judgment and the lack of administrative support were appalling to him.

Not only was his professional judgment ignored and he was not treated like the professional he tried to be, he was not even rewarded for his teaching or coaching. I sensed that he tried to do an excellent job in both areas by providing quality time for his students. Being an achievement-oriented person, he resented the lack of a reward system and the lack of opportunities for growth. He believed that he had to leave teaching if he wanted to grow personally and professionally. For a man who was concerned with growth for himself and his students, I believe that he became disillusioned about the teaching profession because it did not provide him with the growth he needed or the gratitude he deserved and wanted.

Steve was able to find meaning in his life through giving of himself to his students and feeling good about the example he was setting for them. When he began to feel unappreciated and abused, teaching lost its meaning. Initially, teaching provided him with the positive experiences that are necessary for his fulfillment. When he was required to work so many extra hours and perform so many extra duties without a thank you, teaching lost its meaning.

I sensed that he felt compelled to resign from teaching and redirect his energies in an area where he could achieve and advance on his own merit rather than be taken for granted.

I felt that he feared he was becoming a bitter man and believed that he had to leave teaching before he became like so many of the teachers with whom he worked. He indicated that these teachers were only counting down their years until they could retire. As he said, the system was beating him down and he wanted to be a winner for his son and not a "beaten by the system" father who had retirement on his mind. Being a role model was important to him for his students and his son.

I found that he was bitter about the duties he was required to do, the demands on his time, and the treatment he received. Also, I believe that he wanted to stay in the field of teaching if he had had more respect, opportunities for growth, and administrative support. He needed to feel that his efforts were appreciated. When he was not rewarded and appreciated, he could not endure the job any longer and as a result, he felt "burned out" and decided not to return to teaching.

From our conversation, I was convinced that he had been extremely dedicated to teaching. He pointed out his concerns for the future of education several times and ended the interview by saying that teaching will not change. He

supported this by saying that good teachers will not be rewarded for their excellence and that there are no incentives to retain them. He summarized by saying that he believed teachers could only stay in the present system for a limited number of years and he reached his limit at the end of eight.

After the interview ended, I felt depressed because I had listened to a man who loved teaching and who wanted to make a difference in the lives of students but believed that he could not do so in the existing educational system. I believe that Steve is a unique young man because he conveys a sensitivity and a concern for humankind that I have not found in many people. I feel saddened that he is no longer in the classroom.

#### Discussion of the Four Interviews

As stated earlier, the purpose for the interview phase of this research was to investigate individual reasons why four career-status teachers terminated their teaching positions early, and to attempt to gain further insight into the questions and issues outlined in Chapter III. To do this, I listened to hours of tapes for each of the interviewees and re-read each transcript many times. As a result, I have identified several areas of agreement and differences among the four people. In attempting to present my findings to the reader clearly, I will refer to the five questions individually and give the responses of the

interviewees.

The four individual responses to the first question, "Why are career-status teachers terminating their careers early?," differed in the terminology they used. However, the overriding theme seemed to be that all four of the teachers had given their time and energies to the profession and were getting very little, if anything, in return. The interviewees believed that other teachers shared their concerns and were leaving teaching for the same reasons they resigned. All four left because they felt stagnated and had a personal need for growth. Teaching did not provide them with the opportunities for growth that they needed. Also teaching did not provide them with the incentive to continue. Specifically, B. J. needed to achieve goals that she set for herself. She reached each goal that she established in teaching and found that she could not advance. She could not see herself doing the same things over and over until retirement; she wanted more out of life. Michelle was searching for fulfilling and transforming experiences but she could not find these in teaching. The system did not allow her enough space for growth and as a result she too had to leave. Unlike B. J. who was assertive and goal oriented, Jack was not. He only wanted to be self-sufficient and to pursue his creative abilities. Teaching did not give him the chance; instead, he found teaching to be confining, frustrating, and draining. Steve,



also an achievement oriented person, wanted to work hard and be rewarded and appreciated for his efforts. He wanted to make a difference in the lives of the students he taught. Paradoxically, he found that teaching was not rewarding, only demanding; the more he gave, the more the system expected from him. In summary, all of the interviewees wanted more than to work a job as though they were in a factory. They wanted to grow and in turn play a vital part in helping others grow. For these people the realities of teaching did not provide the opportunities they needed.

The interviewees responded to the second question, "Do you believe you suffered from the phenomenon of burnout?," with an emphatic yes. All four believed that they suffered from mental and physical exhaustion and repeatedly referred to being tired. Michelle expanded her answer to include intellectual and spiritual exhaustion. She said that she would rather sell doughnuts than to teach another year under the present educational system. Burnout was made evident in Steve not only by mental and physical exhaustion but also through physical illness. He had reached a point where he was on medication and under the doctor's care. Jack had reached a phase where he hated to see Sunday nights arrive because he knew that Monday mornings followed which meant five more days to spend at school.

The responses to the third question, "How extensively did these teachers integrate teaching with their personal

lives?," varied with each individual. Jack said that separating his personal and professional lives was extremely important to him and had made a conscious effort so. However, teaching had pervaded his thoughts to the point that he could never escape from it. He admitted that to be an excellent teacher all the time required a 24-hour-a-day commitment. Michelle, B. J., and Steve made no direct effort, unlike Jack, to separate teaching from their personal lives. On the contrary, Michelle integrated teaching with her life extensively. She and her husband entertained students in their home and accompanied them on trips. Her door was always open to her students who needed her help. Similarly, B. J. found that teaching was not an 8-hour-a-day job. She too gave her time and energies outside school hours helping not only her present students but also former graduates who continued to depend upon her. In addition, she found that she had to complete work for the superintendent and the principal in her spare time. Teaching was a 24-hour-a-day job for her. Steve also integrated teaching into his personal life at first; however, when his son was born he found that he resented the number of hours that he had to spend away from him. He pointed out that his attitude would have been different if he earned an adequate income for his family and if he felt that he was rewarded and appreciated for his time. Income was a more important issue to him than to the others.

The fourth question, "Were these teachers able to derive meaning from their teaching experience? If not, did this contribute to their unhappiness?," was a very important issue for each of the interviewees. All four interviewees said that they found meaning in helping others learn and making a difference in their lives. Steve said that he also found meaning in God, his family, and his country. When he first entered teaching he found meaning in working with young people. As his career removed him from his family, especially his son, he came to resent teaching. Michelle found meaning through interacting with her students either in class or on an individual basis to find new understanding of the world in which they lived. Unlike the others, Jack did not have a love for teaching. He entered the profession because it was a job and he needed one at the time. Jack found meaning in being able to help people who wanted to learn and grow. Learning, creating, and utilizing one's own abilities to be self-sufficient were meaningful experiences for him. B. J. found meaning in setting significant goals and attaining them. She prided herself in achievement and being the best that she could be.

When the fifth question, "Do you believe that terminating your career could have been avoided?," was addressed, each interviewee immediately answered no. B. J. had reached a point where she felt stagnated. Fearing that she would become complacent, she was compelled to resign.

She knew that she needed challenges in her life and teaching no longer provided these for her. Michelle was exhausted and said that she knew that she would not be around to collect her gold watch at retirement time. Jack said that he did not want to teach any longer. He knew that he could not teach for 20 more years and added that he would never again stay in a job that did not provide growth for him. Steve knew that he would not be teaching at 55 and said that he would rather dig ditches than repeat his last year of teaching.

Several issues that were not addressed by the initial five questions surfaced during the interviews. For example, B. J., a single teacher, felt resentment for teachers who refused to carry their share of the extracurricular activities because they were married and had children. She indicated that the system took advantage of her because of her marital status, and as a result she had to handle many extra duties to make up for the slack produced by the married teachers. She pointed out that she was paid on the same salary scale as the teachers who refused to do extra duties. The inequity which resulted would not have been such a problem if she had been adequately compensated for her extra time. Ironically, while the other three interviewees were married, they also believed that the system took advantage of them because they were required to perform many extra duties beyond the classroom. For

Michelle, Steve and Jack, marriage was not an issue during the interviews, only the extra duties.

Another area of differences in the dialogues focused on whether or not teachers should be role models for students. Both B. J. and Steve felt that teachers should be role models and set good examples for students to follow. On the contrary, Michelle said that she did not try to be a role model for her students because she believed that such actions placed the teacher above the students. As she said several times, "We are all in this together." Serving as a role model conflicted with her basic philosophy. Jack did not address the issue.

The bureaucratic structure found in the different school systems was a topic not addressed by the original five questions. However, B. J., Michelle, and Jack discussed the composition of their respective school boards and pointed out that many of the existing board members knew very little about education and only served on the board for personal or special interest reasons. As a result, many policies were made which did not appear to be in the interest of education or teachers. The school board was not an issue for Steve. He said that he did not pay attention to the actions of the board and was only concerned with the school level administration.

Another area of difference for the interviewees involved instructional concerns. Jack was adamantly against

classes with large numbers of students. He believed that real learning takes place on an individual level and that a classroom setting only serves as a breeding ground for disruptions. He proposed that unless the existing educational system could be restructured, society should not expect any more from the schools than they are presently receiving. Michelle also tried to work individually with her students but in a different manner than Jack did. Her emphasis was more on introducing the student to enlightening experiences and ways of knowing. Jack's emphasis was on developing one's creative abilities that can be practically applied. B. J. tried to ready her students for the job market by giving them a solid foundation for their adult lives.

Several suggestions to improve teaching emerged from the conversations. Jack suggested that teachers should only be responsible for teaching. Parents and aides should be utilized to assist teachers and to perform all patrol, clerical, and extracurricular duties. He also stated that curriculum specialists should work with administrators to make policies instead of an elected board. B. J. suggested that business people should serve as advisors to the administrators rather than a school board. She also recommended that parents be requested to sponsor dances, clubs, and other social activities for students. Steve suggested that teachers and administrators exchange jobs

periodically to gain appreciation and understanding for each position. One of Michelle's recommendations was that teachers should have more power and autonomy to teach.

Teaching became a frustrating experience for each of these people when they were no longer able to make a difference in their own eyes. Yet, according to the criteria for evaluations, they were regarded as excellent teachers. The feelings that they were not making the impact that was desired was from a personal vantage point. Each one entered the teaching profession possessing a desire to make a contribution and to help others learn. When they were faced with the realities of teaching including the extra duties, the paperwork, the bureaucracy, lack of professional treatment, and the lack of administrative support, their ideals and hopes quickly faded.

Through different dialogues and different issues each of the interviewees was virtually pleading for the same concepts. They wanted to be treated like professionals and be respected for their professional judgment. Each one became frustrated, disenchanted, and discouraged with teaching. Throughout the four interviews, I was convinced that these teachers were not dissatisfied with their respective fields of study or with the concept of helping others learn. Quite the contrary, they were dissatisfied and tired of the lack of human-ness toward them. To different degrees, they were tired of the system and all the many

impositions of committees, sponsorships, extracurricular activities, unnecessary duties, and far too much paperwork. All they wanted to do was to teach and to teach students who wanted to learn. Instead, they were "worn down" and "burned out" to the point of saying goodbye to their chosen profession. All of the four believed in the importance of growing and learning, but believed that teaching did not provide these opportunities for them. Rather than continuing in their states of unhappiness, each one had an opportunity to leave teaching and each seized the moment. In reflection all four stated that to be an excellent teacher is an emotionally, intellectually, mentally, and physically exhausting experience. The energies required to be excellent cannot be sustained over long periods of time; hence, each of the four advocated that one should not have to teach over 10 or 15 years. The average length of service of the interviewees was 11 years.

Even though the four interviewees held different attitudes toward teaching, they were concerned with the future of education. All felt that teachers should be treated like professionals and paid accordingly. Housekeeping, patrol, clerical, and other duties which do not require a college degree or teacher certification should not be performed by teachers. In conclusion, all of the four believed that teachers should be allowed to teach and the function of administrators should be to reduce any barriers which keep them from doing so.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Reflections on the Research

From working with people whom I considered to be excellent teachers, I found that many teachers after a period of developing career status positions and an excellent reputation were not able to tolerate teaching any longer and felt compelled to resign. One of the primary reasons for this research was to investigate why this was occurring. An implicit issue for this research was the impact of excellent teachers leaving the field on the future of education. When I discussed my concerns with people in education, the reasons they gave for teacher resignations were always "burnout" and "low salaries." Even though these answers came regularly, I felt that the problem had to be more complex.

The first phase of the research was to review the literature to figure out what this phenomenon of burnout was all about and whether the term was being used as a catch-all phrase for different phenomena. The review of the literature indicated that burnout is a relatively recent term and the first reference to burnout on the job appeared in an article by Herbert Freudenberger in 1975. Since that time, much has been written on the phenomenon.

Some of the leading authorities on burnout used in this research include Freudenberger, Richelson, Maslach, Mattingly, Pines, Kafry, Lauderdale, Cherniss, Aronson, Alschuler, Edelwich, and Brodsky. There does not seem to be a consensus on what burnout means or what causes it. Other areas of disagreement among these authors included ways to help people cope with burnout. To illustrate, some of the researchers stressed that workshops were very effective means to cope with burnout while others emphasized that they were a waste of time and left people filled with disillusionment. Contrary to some researchers, a few authors stated that meditation was an extremely valuable method for coping with burnout.

Even though the researchers cannot agree on definitions or coping strategies for burnout, they do agree that the phenomenon varies from individual to individual and occurs primarily in the helping professions where people work closely with each other. Burnout lays claim to some of the best people who tend to immerse themselves in their professions. Burnout evidences itself in emotional, physical, and attitudinal exhaustion. Freudenberger pointed out that it manifests itself in people who are overdedicated and overcommitted. In fact the characteristics that portray good teachers are the same characteristics that are exhibited by candidates for burnout.

The literature speaks to major issues such as

frustrations, alienation, and loneliness experienced by teachers. The research literature included several aspects of the sources of burnout, e. g. marital status, parental status, teacher frustration, confinement and isolation in the "egg crate" or cellular organization of classrooms, no power or control, and little if any collegiality. In addition, Lortie characterized teaching as being relatively "career less" and "front loaded." A persistent theme in the literature is the frustration teachers feel over the sense of responsibility to teach each student at a high quality level. When this cannot be accomplished many high expectations are never realized. Lauderdale attributed the first stages of burnout to these unfilled expectations. Maslach also pointed out that when cherished ideals held by teachers who enter the profession are replaced with classroom reality, burnout results.

From the review of the literature, three primary sources that cause burnout emerged. Burnout has been attributed to either one or a combination of the following factors: 1) the individual, 2) the organizational situations, and/or 3) social and cultural change. Many researchers stress that the phenomenon extends beyond the work place to include all aspects of one's life and, consequently, reflects the interconnectedness of life to work. Lauderdale said that "burnout is a relationship between events in life and the meaning and understanding the

individual draws from life" (1982, p. 63).

While the existing research was interesting and informative, one of the major inadequacies which emerged is that the literature does not provide strategies to assist people in finding meaning and a sense of purpose in their lives to guard them against the onset of burnout. The literature lacked in-depth accounts of how teachers detected meaning and how they experienced their teaching and integrated it with their personal lives. Because I believed that meaning must be understood before anything could be done to alleviate burnout, the research continued.

The second phase of the research was to review the literature by Gardner, Allport, Frankl, Jersild, and others who wrote on meaning. Jersild pointed out that when teachers find a meaning for their lives and in their teaching, they were much happier. He also found that some teachers were not finding meaning in teaching. When meaning is lacking and teaching is viewed as an empty formality, apathy, one of the stages of burnout, sets in. There are no easy answers to help a person to find meaning either personally or professionally, and there are no established procedures to follow.

For the purposes of this research the concept developed by Frankl was used as a framework for meaning. Frankl presented a possible solution for the meaning for life and

work. He contended that the philosophy for life is based upon three fundamental assumptions: 1) freedom of will; 2) will to meaning; and 3) meaning of life. He stated that meaning was unique for each individual and that meaning was never just the person since it transcended the individual. Frankl believed that meaning could be detected in one of three ways: what we give to life, experiences, and suffering. Accordingly, meaning abounds in every situation; it is not invented, it is detected.

The third phase of this research was to select a mode of inquiry that would help give me further insights into teacher burnout. I believed that my analysis of the issues could be evidenced by interviewing four teachers who had actually experienced what people call burnout.

Through the method of research I used, I believe I captured as accurately as possible the essence of each teacher and how they experienced teaching. I also felt a closeness to each person and I felt very drained and depressed at the end of each session. This type of inquiry lends itself to a connectedness with the interviewee that is difficult to convey unless one has experienced it.

I was particularly intent upon hearing their stories because I resigned from teaching after ten years in the classroom and like the four teachers in this research, I had received excellent evaluations and for many years teaching was my life. Listening to their stories was like listening

to my own. In the words of Harvey Cox, "I lift my glass to their story and I know the toast is right, because at a deeper level, one we all can glimpse on occasion, 'their' story is my story too" (1973, p. 257).

This research has left me with many memories of the four people who shared their teaching experiences with me. B. J., Michelle, Steve and Jack will always be very special to me. As a result of their interviews, I believe that I understand these teachers and how they experienced teaching. I have talked with them since the interviews and unlike other conversations, I find that we engage in dialectic exchanges that are meaningful. Steve told me that no one else in education had ever asked him how he experienced teaching or why he resigned. He said that everyone seemed to know, but no one wanted to improve teaching. He also commented that I was the only person who had ever told him that I believed that teaching suffered a loss when he resigned and I felt saddened that students could no longer have him as a teacher.

During the actual interviews, I found that I became so absorbed in what I was hearing that I lost track of time and my surroundings. The first time I played Michelle's tape I was surprised to hear the background noise which contained coughing, slamming of doors, and clanging of pots and pans. The interview was taped in a restaurant and while it was in process I did not hear the noise. When I changed the tapes

during Jack's interview, the tape recorder malfunctioned. Neither one of us was aware that the tape was not running until I tried to stop it because of an interruption.

The interviews contained humorous accounts of situations that these teachers encountered with students. Many times they would comment that they had forgotten this or that story. As we reminisced about teaching, many of my own teaching experiences were remembered.

While listening to the tapes in the privacy of my study, I laughed and I cried. At times I found the interviews to be mentally exhausting as I listened to these teachers relive their experiences. When Michelle and I completed our interview, we were both tired. It was not a physical tiredness. It was an emotional drain. At the end of the interview with Steve, he commented that I looked exhausted. I was exhausted because he was the last interviewee and the information that he gave me contained much of the same feelings and concerns that the others had shared. I felt a tremendous responsibility to share their stories. I was also depressed because I knew that each of these people was an extraordinary human being who is uniquely special. The teaching profession suffered a loss when they resigned.

#### Questions and Conclusions Resulting from the Research

Beyond the personal memories are some general conclusions that emerged from this study. These take the

form of some questions and some interpretations of the findings. Two questions that emerged focus on the generalities of the findings from the four interviews. Even though, this research was not intended to be representative of the teaching population in general, the answers to these questions would be good to know.

This first question was "Do other teachers who resign from teaching positions share feelings and concerns similar to those of the four teachers interviewed?" A study to expand my research to include other former teachers who have resigned would broaden the base of this study. Such research could serve as an indicator of the turnover in the profession in the future. Further research in this area could also serve as a basis for improving teacher training programs and administrative training programs.

The second question was, "Do teachers who retire at the end of a career share concerns similar to those of teachers who resign before accumulating enough years for retirement?" Through my own observations and through the responses from the interviews, I found that many teachers who are near retirement end up counting the number of years, months, and days until they can leave. I found that some teachers who are at this point in their careers have become very bitter and cynical. "And among teachers with many years of service it is not at all uncommon to find those who will admit they are simply serving time until they can retire on pension"



(Hart, 1969, p. 152). They feel trapped because they are tied to the retirement system. A study to investigate this would not only be interesting but also a valuable tool for staff development planners and school administrators.

Another question emerging from this research focuses on the concept of meaning. It is clear to me that such a concept is needed, but after trying to apply it, I found it to be a very elusive term. Specifically, I want to know, "Can meaning be defined or is it a transcendental term?" After reading many books and articles on meaning, I have decided that meaning like the word love is vague and ill defined. I believe that the term can only be personally defined at best. Because meaning changes, I am not sure that it can ever be pinned down to a definition. As I continued working with and reviewing the former teachers' tapes and rereading their transcripts, many questions kept reoccurring to me. I tried to relate their responses to Frankl's works. As a result of trying to make these comparisons, I began to reread his books. This time as I read Frankl, I found that he did not offer a firm definition for meaning. For example, he spoke in generalities rather than specifically defining meaning by saying that meaning is what is meant. Meaning is more than being, it transcends existence. Meaning is more than values and deeds; meaning is unique from man to man and changes from hour to hour, from day to day. He kept saying that meaning changes, and just

like the authors of burnout he never came to a firm agreement on what meaning is. I am convinced that only an individual can decide meaning. This meaning is influenced by personal situations, occupational situations, family situations, philosophical beliefs, religious beliefs, intellectual foundations, and emotions, every aspect of a life. Just as I discussed in Chapter I, some of the authors on burnout said that it influenced the different aspects of life. I believe that meaning like burnout affects all the different aspects of one's life. I do agree with Frankl in that meaning changes and I believe that many extenuating circumstances cause meaning to change for an individual.

There are also two general questions on basic educational policy that seemed to be reflected in this research. The first question was, "Is it possible to alleviate burnout and thereby retain outstanding teachers who are resigning?" This question has remained in my mind since I completed the review of the literature on burnout. Lauderdale stated that "the solution for burnout is not in the environment, but within the individual. The ultimate is a change in the self-concept" (1982, p. 113). If teaching does not change and if teachers are not treated and respected as professionals, I seriously doubt if it is possible to prevent burnout in teaching. This is the stage where effective administrators could work at correcting the existing situation to provide support and professional and

personal growth through inservice programs.

The next question emerged from the preceding one. "Can staff development activities be designed to assist teachers in finding meaning?" Effective staff development activities are difficult to plan. Many times the people who are planning the inservice programs are far removed from teacher reality. Also it is impossible to know what individual teachers need to help them be better teachers and to help them grow personally and professionally. While conducting this research, I recalled my own staff development days. During the ten years in which I taught, the one inservice activity that stood out as being the most effective was conducted by fellow teachers. They shared resource and supplementary materials and ideas that had really worked for them with students. I finally learned something to take back to the classroom with me and something that I could use. One activity in ten years! As the interviewees addressed their experiences with staff development, I found that they did not learn from or enjoy their inservice education. In fact they could not even recall the names of the activities they attended. Some workshops were conducted by book salespeople and some were to view films. While these may be poor examples of workshops, the fact remains that staff development planners should keep in mind their audiences. These audiences are comprised of college graduates who have experience in the classroom. They know

how to read and how to view books and films on their own. They need ideas which can be used in the classroom. They need to have input into the activities they receive. I believe that staff development activities can play an extremely important role in alleviating burnout.

It is difficult to feel bored in a job where one is constantly learning. Boredom develops when one has mastered a particular role but must continue to perform it, day after day, year after year. When the role structure of a program allows staff to learn new skills, further their theoretical sophistication, and use these new skills and sophistication in their work, the job remains stimulating. Boredom and burnout are prevented. (Cherniss, 1980, p. 94)

Generally, staff development activities do not focus on the larger issues that were addressed in this research. They do not help teachers find meaning or deal with problems that contribute to the phenomenon of burnout.

The last two questions that resulted from this research deal with broad, cultural issues. Specifically, "Will teachers ever be treated like professionals?" I hope that some day all teachers will act and be treated like professionals. Unfortunately, I believe that many of the people in administration who were former teachers treat the teachers who report to them just as they were treated. Many times this is to treat teachers like students in a classroom. Until this ceases, professionalism in teaching will not exist. Until society treats teachers with respect and not like baby sitters, things will not change. Until

teachers regard their own profession as a profession and not as a job, the situation will not change.

The last broad question was "Can the energies required for creative and effective teaching be sustained for 30 to 35 years or are these energies spent for some teachers after 10 to 15 years?" From my research I found that the energies required for excellent teaching could not be sustained by the four interviewees. Just as Cherniss stated, "In human service work, helpers often feel that they are giving constantly and getting very little in return. This imbalance is a source of dissatisfaction which exacerbates job stress and burnout" (1980, p. 94). The answer to this question could change the requirements for the length of a teaching career. Instead of allowing teachers to burnout, they would be allowed to retire early, take leaves of absences, and/or rotate among various positions in the school system without having to leave their chosen profession with feelings of failure.

To put what I have learned from this research into an educational framework for teachers, I have concluded that burnout involves loss of meaning in teaching and that the phenomenon of burnout can be said to exist in that it is a burnout of meaning. When a teacher can find meaning, when positive feedback and influences are present, when fulfillment is gained whether it is from society, a parent, an administrator or from within, I do not believe that

burnout occurs. When a teacher can find purpose, it is this meaning which provides them with the energies to sustain teaching. As I discussed earlier, it is when teachers are not renewed and their energies are being exhausted that burnout occurs. To this I would add that meaning is one way to renew and replenish the energies which are expended as well as to enable the teacher to grow personally and professionally. It is only when meaning does not exist that the teacher burns out. I do not believe that burnout would prevail in the teachers' lives and dominate their careers to the point that they had to abandon them, if the teachers found meaning and believed in what they were doing and felt appreciated for what they were doing. I have pointed to several possible contributors to burnout and among these are lack of professional treatment, lack of administrative support, lack of control over the classroom, and too many nonteaching duties. I have decided that none of these by itself causes burnout, but they become more powerful when teachers cannot find meaning in what they are doing and are required to do. When meaning is lost, burnout sets in and the other problems seem to grow. As these problems grow, they become larger and larger and meaning is exhausted. What is burned out in the teaching profession is the meaning.

To be an outstanding teacher is difficult and thankless. When teachers enter the classroom, they must be

prepared. This preparation extends beyond being ready to deliver the subject matter for the day to include being prepared to face and deal with all unknown problems and situations which occur without notice. Teachers must be prepared to deal with their own sets of realities as well as the realities of each student in the class. Every time another student is added to the classroom roster, another set of realities must be learned and understood.

The teacher is not expected just to teach the subject matter they were trained to teach. The teacher is expected to be all things to all people which is an impossible task. Without regard for lesson preparations and papers to grade, the teacher is expected to keep accurate records and complete all reports expeditiously and eagerly. Without regard to the energy drain experienced daily in the classroom, the teacher is expected to sponsor and coach social, honor, and service clubs; sports, plays, and other extracurricular activities. Without regard for a personal life, the teacher is expected to attend outside school-sponsored events including athletic contests, plays, concerts, dances, proms, PTA's, field trips, and graduations. Without regard for professional training, experience, and degrees earned, the teacher is expected to police parking lots, halls, cafeterias, and bathrooms as well as keep an orderly and clean classroom. Without compensation, the teacher is expected to attend meetings and

serve on committees. Somewhere squeezed between these activities, the teacher is supposed to teach.

The key to these statements is that teachers are expected to perform these tasks and fill these roles without regard for their personhood, professionalism, and fields of expertise. When teachers stop to complain about excessive demands, they are often labeled cynical, bitter, or negative.

There is no doubt in my mind that it takes a "super" human being to be outstanding in all the areas that a teacher must cover. The excessive demands and energy drains on the individual must be experienced to be understood and appreciated. Teaching can be compared to a Broadway play that requires a 24-member cast and only one teacher has been hired to play all the roles. Unlike a play, there are no curtains at the end of a two-hour performance. The performance must be sustained for a minimum of eight hours a day, five days a week with no applause at the end.

From my research I found the following indicators of the difficult conditions under which teachers work:

Teaching is a profession which can be sustained by some teachers for a limited number of years.

Burnout occurs when a profession ceases to have meaning.

Teachers are required to perform too many nonteaching duties including patrol, clerical, extracurricular duties, housekeeping, and discipline.



Teachers are not allowed to teach.

Teachers are not treated like professionals and many times their professional judgment is ignored.

Excellent teaching is exhausting and drains energies while mediocre teaching is not as demanding.

The majority of staff development activities are a waste of time for most teachers and do not help a teacher grow either personally or professionally. They serve only to take the teacher away from planning and grading time.

A gap exists between beginning teacher expectations and classroom reality.

Teachers do not have administrative support and believe they are treated like students.

Teachers are not rewarded for excellence.

Some teachers believe that merit pay plans will add another layer of bureaucracy and will not be equitable.

Low salaries are only one of many reasons why teachers are leaving the profession.

Teachers find that teaching is confining, stifling, frustrating, draining, and physically, mentally, intellectually, and spiritually exhausting.

School boards and other decision makers are removed from classroom reality and mandate policies which are difficult to implement.

Teachers want to teach and believe that the role of the administration should be to reduce any barriers which keep them from doing so.

The question then becomes, who is responsible for the excessive demands, pressures, unrealistic expectations and lack of regard and recognition? Because I believe that the words "organization" and "society" are collective nouns, I

attribute burnout to the people who comprise the organizations and society who allow burnout not only to survive but to flourish. Ultimately, burnout occurs when individuals can no longer detect meaning from their personal or professional lives because they lose the energies to deal with the problems resulting from a combination of personal, organizational, and societal pressures, influences, and demands.

I firmly believe that unless these problems are confronted and addressed, they will continue to grow and multiply. As a result, society will continue to lose some of its best teachers and education will continue to be mediocre. Because I care about children and what they learn, about teachers and how they teach, about the worth of the human being and growth and development, I do not believe that this should be allowed to continue to go unnoticed.

In conclusion, I challenge teachers to be more professional and detect meaning in their professions. I challenge administrators to render as much assistance as possible, to treat teachers as professional adults, and to support them in hopes of retaining excellent teachers. I challenge development planners to provide inservice education which is enriching and meaningful to teachers. I challenge future researchers to continue to bring educational issues to the surface. Finally, I challenge society to demand that teachers work under conditions that will allow them to be professionals and to eliminate mediocrity in education.

I realize that this research will not revolutionize the field of education; however, it is my intent that as a result of this study teaching will improve for those who read it and act upon it. Problems do not change overnight. In the words of John Gardner, "As a nation we managed to live for eighty-nine years with the phrase 'all men are created equal' before we freed the slaves. And we let another fifty-five years pass before we gave women the vote. We don't rush into things" (1978, p. 38). This is true, but it is also true that unless we recognize and acknowledge that problems exist, nothing is ever done to improve or eliminate them. Because outstanding teachers are an endangered species, I believe that we must work to make teaching a meaningful profession where teachers can not only survive, but grow personally and professionally.

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